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THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

THE POEMS OF
THOMAS BAILEY
ALDRICH



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21

POEMS

OF

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH



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THE BELLS
A COLLECTION OF CHIMES
(1855)

THE BELLS, A COLLECTION OF CHIMES

PROEM

I. The Christening

I'VE christened these, my poesies, THE BELLS,
Because there is, or should be, in all rhymes,
A music soft and silv'ry as the chimes
That float at evening through the twilight dells,
Born in the belfry of some village church,
Hid by the ivy clamb'ring from its porch.

Because some verses have a solemn roll,
Sweetly sad, a melancholy swelling,
Like the deep bells of a cathedral, telling
The sad departure of another Soul
For the Eternal City! that far shore,
Where, like a sea, Time breaketh evermore!

Because in Bells there something is to me
Of rhythms and the poets of gone years —
A sad reverberation, breeding tears,
Touching the finer chords of memory!
Bells be the name! may their vibrations clear,
Fall in mild cadences upon thine ear!

II. To My Friends

YE friends that gild my humbler way!
Ye stars that brighten year by year!

I know your hearts are with him here
Who seeks to tread a wider sphere;
I know the words that ye would say.

And thou, O friend! I have not seen!
Whose hand has never grasped my own,
Whose ear has never caught a tone
From lips of mine, to whom I'm known
In thoughts, and not by form or mien;

May I not hope some passing tone
May start thy sleeping memory,
May bring some clouded joy to thee?
'Twere sweet to know, though strangers we,
Thy heart is chiming with my own!

PRELUDE

TO THE STEEPLE OF ST. AYNE

THE snow was on the housetop,
And on the poplars tall;
And the firelight's hand was tracing
Weird pictures on the wall;

And nearer to the embers
I drew my little chair,
And gazing on the winking logs
I saw wild figures there.

Sometimes it was a castle
With turrets all a-gleam;
A drawbridge, stretching like an arm,
Across the molten stream;

Gonfalons, and warriors
Encased in armor red;
And all the legends I had heard,
Came trooping thro' my head.

I thought of ruins hoary
Beside the Danube's wave,
Of Vogelweid whose treasures fed
The birds around his grave.

I thought of shadows sleeping
Around the Rodenstein;
And tales that hover bird-like o'er
The silver river Rhine.

And melody stole on me
Like a sweet midnight chime;
And 'mong the branches of my brain
I found this nest of rhyme.


THE STEEPLE OF ST. AYNE

YOU'LL see it through the hemlock boughs,
As down the moorland road you pass,
Standing ghostly, brown and still
In the shadow of a hill.
There is not a pane of glass
In any of the carven sashes;
But thick around them, like eyelashes,
Hang the cobwebs old and gray!
In and out those glassless sockets,
Floats the lazy sun all day.
I have often heard it said
Hair grows on the confined dead:

I know not if it be so;
But upon the belfry's crown,
Mosses of a dappled brown
And many curious colors grow!

In the steeple, where the swallows
Dart, like lightning, to and fro,
Swings the ponderous bell, which monks
In that tower long ago,
Hung with many pater nosters,
Chanted hymns and litanies!
Praying when, at eve, it swung
Between its lips its iron tongue,
What it said might reach far cities
And their sinful inmates save;
Telling with its solemn tolling
Time was ever, ever knolling
Mortals to the cold, damp grave!

As I stand, the twilight with me,
In the Steeple of St. Ayne,
Far I wander in the regions
Of the misty Land of Legends,
Painting pictures on my brain.
Olden scenes came back to me;
The past throws off its dusty shroud. —
The Abbot and the monkish train
In the old cathedral crowd,
Filling aisles and niches dim
With their pious murmuring;
And, as silver censers swing,
Swells and sinks their evening hymn.
To the gorgeous frescoed dome —



Paintings, brought from holy Rome —
Floats in clouds the soft perfume;
While the pensive evening gloom,
With a foot that seems to falter,
Mounts the carved steps of the altar,
Standing silently beside
An image of the Crucified!
Now the solemn chant of souls
Through gallery and cloister rolls!
While, as if with sudden pain,
Dolorous the Curfew tolls
In the Steeple of St. Ayne.

Now I see a marriage *cortège*,
Mailed knights and cavaliers;
Reeling plumes and glist'ning lances;
Maidens with their stolen glances;
Dames in kirtles of brocade —
All the pomp of other years.
Then the bride in white arrayed,
Milky roses on her brow,
White and beautiful as snow,
While her deep and blond eyes glisten
As the beams from Dian's bow.
On her bosom, budding forth
Like lilies from the pregnant earth,
Gems, as rich as those of Ind,
From the caverns of the East,
Rise and fall at every breath
As she gives her hand beneath
The benediction of the priest.
Hushed the epithalamium!
All the gaudy train is gone,
Priest, choragus; and deep Silence
Sits within the pews alone!

And, now through the open door
Streams the sunshine on the floor,
Throwing sparkles where the dismal,
Breathless shadows moped before.
By the marble urn baptismal,
Standeth two to whom is given
A revelation late from heaven!
A piece of clay! a little breath!
A form to toil and bear its cross
Like the Christ of Nazareth!

Now I see a funeral train,
Passing sorrowful and slow
Through the chiselled portico,
Where are shadows sad and solemn
Cast by many a fluted column.
To the altar front they bear
Their lifeless charge and leave it there.
At the feet and at the head
Of the shrived and shrouded dead,
Candles burn. The sunlight's fingers,
Dipped in the window's hues,
Throw an iridescent light
On the coffin, and it lingers
Till the gibbous moon at night,
Looking through that painted window,
Throws her lovelier tints below.
Mournfully the funeral train,
Tearful, sad and slow,
Passes thro' the porch again,
While the bell within the steeple,
Throbbeth like a heart in woe!

'Tis gone! 'tis gone! I am alone,
With the calm, starry night alone,
In the old Steeple of St. Ayne!
The chanting, hooded monks are gone;
The marriage train has sought the regions
Of the misty Land of Legends;
And the sunshine through the door
Sleepeth not upon the floor;
And the dead one, borne so slow
Through the friezed portico,
Has come back again
To the charnel of my brain!
O'er these shadows — shadows all —
Reality has thrown a pall.
Yet the steeple loometh still
In the shadow of the hill;
Standing, shattered, yet sublime —
A *tombstone* to departed Time!

CHATTERTON

I

THIS eve my heart is floating upon tears,
A fallen rose-leaf floating on a stream.
In the dim shadow of departed years
I have been lying with a saddened dream —
A dream of poor, poor CHATTERTON!
That soul which, like the thousand-lanced sun,
Ate itself into night! that monarch soul!
Which foamed and muttered like the sobbing sea,
And broke a heart that it could not control.
Poor CHATTERTON! who does not weep for thee?

What bosom melts not at the mournful tale
Of thy short, fevered life? Thou diedst in scorn,
Like the proud moon that doth majestic sail
The ebon night, and sinks before the dawn.

II

As the soft snow comes down
And fills each secret nook,
Robbing the ice-stilled brook
And the housetops of the town,
And the chimneys as they look,
With open mouths, to all
The flakes, till in a pall
Of white the earth is hid;
So did Ambition creep
Upon the child unbid.
Each grotto of his heart
Is filled, each crevice deep,
E'en as the eye its lid.
'Twas of his soul a part.

III

'Twas twilight ebb, and the boy was sitting
In a deep recess of the Gothic hall;
Wildest thoughts across his heart were flitting,
Wild as the tracery upon the wall.
Upon a stair of stars the Night came down,
With footfalls noiseless as the stealthy air,
And like a mantle wrapped the shouldered town;
And still the child sat dreaming, brooding there.
The moon sleeked "anciente" Bristol with her beams,
And from St. Mary's swelled the midnight chime;

Still sat the boy, his hot brain moulding dreams
Which cluster, star-like, on the sky of Time!

* * * * *

V

Morn broke on restless London, like a sea,
In rippling waves of light; the sun sent all
The sleepy stars to bed. The great city
Was awakened to wrangle in its thrall
Of crime and servitude; and in its streets,
Through which the pulse of greedy Traffic beats,
The crier's voice mixed with the rattling wheel;
And all the vast machinery din
Went on as if from out that place of sin
In the cold night, a spirit did not steal,
Winging its way thro' Heaven's starry fires,
To rest forever on th'eternal shore.
Morn broke on London, crowning all its spires
With gold — but CHATTERTON! he was no more.

VI

In a coffin roughly nailed,
They placed his boyish form
While yet his blood was warm,
His forehead scarcely paled;
And bore him quick along
Amid the heedless throng.
Ah! cruel hands that laid
That little weary frame
Within the grave they made,¹
With nought to tell his name;

¹ "He was cast into the burying-ground of Shoe-lane Workhouse — the pauper's burying-ground — the end, so far as his clayey tabernacle was concerned, of all his dreamy greatness."

—MRS. S. C. HALL.

It should not have been so;
No pauper mound should own
That *shattered casket*, tho'
The *gem* itself is gone!

H. W. L.

LIKE him of old, whose touch divine
Drew water from the senseless stone,
Thy words have drawn a silver tone
Of music from this heart of mine.

O Poet-soul! O gentle one!
Thy thought has made my darkness light;
The solemn Voices of the Night
Have filled me with an inner tone.

Their echoes linger on my ear;
The footsteps of the Angels come
Thro' the long entry to my room;
I almost fancy that I hear

A low, sweet breathing at the door,
And do not dare to move, for I
Would not dispel the fantasy
That grows upon me more and more.

To gain that near, that far-off shore
We only cross a bridge of Sleep,
That bridge sinks not into the deep,
When we have passed, for evermore.

The unfleshed dead can cross again
Unto this sphere. O! I am sure
They're near us, when high thoughts and pure,
Like monarchs, pace our chamber'd brain.

O Bard of Shadows! thine the art
To lead us through the realm of dreams,
Robing the Real until it seems
Of the fair Ideal a part.

I'll drink thy praise in olden wine,
And in the cloak of fine conceit
I'll tell thee how my pulses beat,
How half my being runs to thine.

CRESCENT CITY AT NIGHT

SEEN FROM THE FRENCH CATHEDRAL AT
PLACE D'ARMES

How grand to sit in this old steeple high,
And view the city with its veins of streets!
A muffled sound, like troubled winds that die,
Mounts to the housetops and in space retreats.
The soot-faced chimneys whisper far beneath
With heads half hidden in their smoky breath!

Now, as Night draws her counterpane of black,
And tucks it closely round the horizon,
The lamp-fringed streets are lighted one by one —
Each seems a serpent with a glossy back!
With spectral fingers quiv'ring in the air,
The churches point to where "our Father" dwells;

Ave Maria from the tongues of bells
Floats to the zenith and the angels there,
Who, crowned with asphodel and twilight dim,
Are messengers between this world and Him!

SONG OF A HEART

YE who love Nature, and in Nature, God,
Listen to one whose heart is full of song
And gratitude unto his very lips.

His music is not art-born; it leaps forth
Untutored, like the daisies of the spring,
Or brooks that babble of their own free will.

In the sweet faces of the buds I see
That God swings this flower-scented sphere,
Like a great censer, in the purple void!

I have a sense within me that perceives
His Presence in the blowing wind, and in
The footsteps of the crystal-footed Rain!

To him that holdeth Nature near his heart,
The brooks are hymning praises, and the sea
Is ever rolling some grand anthem forth!

The grass that comes in April to the mounds
In grave-yards, and the vines that creep along
The humble porch of village churches, are

So many fingers pointing up to God!
So many holy monitors that tell
His majesty in silent eloquence!

O, Pilgrim to the Unseen Land! if thou
Art thirsty for the Living Waters; if
Thy lips do hunger for the Bread of Life,

And yet thou fearest "the cold feel of death,"
The grave — that gate-way to eternity
And Paradise — love Nature, for 'tis God.

THE ANGEL

O! MEMORY, the painter!
Limns upon my brain
The faces of beloved ones
I'll never see again!

There is one sainted picture —
O, fancy keep it near! —
'Mid golden hair, Madonna eyes,
Serene, and deep, and clear.

We knew she was an Angel,
We knew she could not stay!
And long we waited tearfully
To see her fly away!

We knew that she was passing
Thro' life untouched, serene,
As far from earth's impurities
As Christ from Magdalene.

The Angels wearied for her,
And so from Paradise
Death came, and kissed her tenderly,
His hand upon her eyes!

And as a flower at evening
Folds its leaves to rest,
She meekly crossed her whitened hands
Upon her peaceful breast:

Laid so white and beautiful,
So full of holy trust,
It seemed a shame to lay so pure
A flower in the dust.

We saw no seraph's pinions,
We saw no mystic things;
But going from our hearts we felt
An Angel's rustling wings!

FANNIE

FANNIE has the sweetest foot
Ever in a gaiter boot!
And the hoyden knows it,
And, of course, she shows it, —
Not the knowledge, but the foot, —
Yet with such a modest grace,
Never seems it out of place.
 Ah, there are not many
 Half so sly, or sad, or mad,
 Or wickedder than Fannie.

Fannie has the blackest hair
Of any of the village girls;
It does not shower on her neck
In silken or coquettish curls.
It droops in folds around her brow,
As clouds, at night, around the moon,
Looped with lilies here and there,
In many a dangerous festoon.
And Fannie wears a gypsy hat,
Saucily — yes, all of that!

Ah, there are not many
Half so sly, or sad, or mad,
Or wickeder than Fannie.

Fannie wears an open dress —
Ah! the charming chemisette!
Half concealing, half revealing
Something far more charming yet.
Fannie drapes her breast with lace,
As one would drape a costly vase
To keep away mischievous flies;
But lace can't keep away one's eyes,
For every time her bosom heaves,
Ah, it peepeth through it;
Yet Fannie looks the while as if
Never once she knew it.

Ah, there are not many
Half so sly, or sad, or mad,
Or innocent as Fannie.

Fannie lays her hand in mine;
Fannie speaks with *naïveté*,
Fannie kisses me, she does!
In her own coquettish way.
Then softly speaks and deeply sighs,
With angels nestled in her eyes.
In the merrie month of May,
Fannie swears sincerely
She will be my own, my wife,
And love me dearly, dearly
Ever after all her life.

Ah, there are not many
Half so sly, or sad, or mad,
As my true-hearted Fannie.

MAUD OF ALLINGGALE

PART I

I

THE wind was toying with her hair,
As on the turret top she stood;
Her gaze was on the bending wood,
And in her eyes a dim despair.
Moaning Ænone, sad and pale,
Sweet Psyche when her love had gone
Were not more tearful or forlorn
Than Maud of Allingdale.

II

And "Ah," she said, "he will not come!
And I have waited all the day."
Afar she saw the ocean spray,
Like lances glimmer in the gloom.
And then the moon came sideling up
Deep set within a milky girth:
And at the zenith turned on earth
Like an inverted cup.

III

Two moons o'er sleeping earth had bent,
Then stately through the heavens strode,
Since Walter from the castle rode
Armed *cap-a-pie* for tournament:
"O Maud of Allingdale!" he said,
"A little while and I will come,"
And fondly o'er her drooped the plume
That floated from his head.

IV

She heard his footsteps on the floor,
She saw him thro' the forest leaves,
The orange sunshine on his greaves;
And he was gone — for evermore;
For in the heart of that green wood,
Unknown, unseen by mortal eyes,
The Castle of a Thousand Dyes
Of fairy Monok stood.

V

This queen immortal loved the knight,
And so she sent an airling brood
To lead him through the bosky wood
Until he knew no left nor right;
And as he paused upon a steep
That rose from out a fountain place,
They sprinkled dewdrops on his face,
And so he fell asleep.

VI

And two white-breasted wood-nymphs took
The dreaming youth in their soft arms,
And bore him where a row of Palms
Shadowed a drawbridge on the brook;
And 'tween two cedars, old and gaunt,
Their summits tinged with yellow light,
They passed, and bore the sleeping knight
Into the fairy haunt.

VII

They took the helmet from his brow,
Unlaced his breastplate, white as milk,
And draped him with a robe of silk
Glittering like frozen snow!
And in his coat of mail instead
They placed a form like Walter's made,
And laid it in the forest glade
As though that he were dead.

PART II

I

When Walter woke his dream-filled eyes
Were dazzled with the rainbow light;
"St. George!" he cried, "I'm lost to sight
And sense, be this not Paradise!"
He heard the trembles of a lute,
He saw the fountains leap in air,
And spread around him everywhere
The most delicious fruit.

II

And chalices ambrosial brimmed,
Flagons of the costliest wine
Fresh from the vineyards of the Rhine,
And honey from the richest skimmed
Rich cordials full of golden eyes;
And delicacies of all isles,
Scattered around him, in huge piles
Lay like wrecked argosies.

III

The trilling of a thousand birds
Burst on him with canorous swells,
And the faint tinkling of far bells
Came rustling through his sense's chords.
The walls were rough with priceless stones,
The window niches diamond-laid,
And the long fluted colonnade
Was girt with wealth of zones.

IV

And there were halls so vast and deep
The eye could scarcely reach half through;
E'en music's echo weary grew,
And tripping through them fell asleep!
Upon his raptured senses stole
The rarest perfume of the spheres
Rich with the crystal, star-born tears
Found in the rose's bowl.

V

"What mystic things will fancy do!"
He said, and, as he spoke, white hands
Undid the glitt'ring silver bands
That held a gorgeous curtain to,
And drawing back the silken screen
His eyes beheld, on throne of gold,
Like Egypt's courtesan of old,
Monok, the fairy Queen.

VI

"O! thou that sittest goddess-like!"
He, kneeling, cried before the throne,
"Tell me if all my brain be gone!
And what these wondrous scenes that strike
My fancy captive? Whence thou art?
And whence this dulcet melody?
These nectar-laden gales, and why
This rustling in my heart?"

VII

Then rich she made him with a smile,
And sweeping from her throne with pride,
She laid her hand on his and sighed,
Half laughing at him all the while;
And to his ear bent down her head,
With voice that had a cymbal's ring,
"Sir Knight of Ainsworth, thou art king
Of this domain!" she said.

VIII

She led him to the 'namelled throne,
And placed a crown upon his brow,
And kneeling at his footstool low,
"Sir Knight," she said, "I am thine own!"
Her breath, like a soft summer gale
Nursed in the heart of some sweet grot,
Was on his cheek, and he forgot
His Maud of Allingdale!

PART III

I

As Lady Maud, heart-sick and pale,
From Ainsworth's tower watched that night,
She saw a strange and flick'ring light
Moving across the darkened vale;
And nearer, nearer still it came,
Until she saw amid the gloom
The floating of a snowy plume.
Her lips half breathed a name.

II

And down the spiral stair she sped,
And in the long torch-lighted hall
She saw upon a bloody pall
Walter of Ainsworth, lying dead.
O! wild and mournful was her wail!
Pale Venus when Adonis died
Had not a sorrow wilder-eyed,
Than Maud of Allingdale.

III

"Whose hand did this?" and then a flood
Of tears o'er her eyelids broke;
And thus the knight of Lydwick spoke:
"We found him slain in yonder wood,
His red blood mingling with the brook,
And his large thoughtful, staring eyes
Fixed on a cloudlet in the skies
With melancholy look.

IV

"We know not how Sir Walter fell;
But if 'twas in concerted fight,
We know he fell like a true knight.
Who struck the blow, it were not well
That he a knight of Ainsworth meet;
We'd teach him that our Walter's death
Has made ten swords in each sheath,
And he should kiss our feet!"

V

Then Lady Maud bent down her head
Upon the image's cold breast,
Like one that lieth down to rest;
They spoke to her, but she was dead!
Ah, why prolong the saddened tale?
In Ainsworth chapel, side by side,
Lies Walter's armor and his bride,
Sweet Maud of Allinggale.

TO MARIE

As sea-shells whisper of the sleepless sea,
Memory whispers of the past and you,
Charming my bosom with its melody.
Those summer nights, which all too quickly flew,
Like singing birds upon their noiseless wings,
Ghost-like rise up before me, and I turn
To sip the chalice pleasing mem'ry brings.
There is one eve I cherish in my breast
Like holy water in a marble urn:
The sun was treading to the yawning West —

To that great graveyard of the buried Days!
And at our feet a devious river rolled,
Squirming and gliding in the sunset's blaze,
Like a great serpent with a skin of gold!
We had been reading a young Bard, who'd stemmed
The sea of criticism, and unfurled
His daring colors to a charmed world;
In his rich our poorer hearts were hemmed.
Your voice was full of tears, and there stood
Two, trembling, on the threshold of your eyes.
O! much, my friend, I envied him who could
Lure two such angels out of Paradise.

You bent above me, and your nighty hair,
Like dusk and sunset mixing, mixed with mine;
I felt a kiss, or 'twas a passing air
That had been loitering on lips divine.
Then you drew back, and with a crimson look
Gazed at the pebbles in the talking brook.

THE KNIGHT OF POESY

ANOTHER Minstrel, panting for a name,
Enters the lists of Rhyme
To run a tilt with Time,
And bring, low kneeling at his feet, great Fame.

With vizard down, he comes as one in mask,
Like some adventurer of old
Who, till he won the Spurs of Gold,
Laid not aside his hauberk or his casque;
He comes, his name and prowess all untold.
Unknown, this Poet-knight,

Mounted on Pegasus, most famous steed !
Seeketh the Tournament of Poesy,
Full of the hope of glorious deed;
 And dares in deadly fight —
Invoking first his patron Muse —
All knights that speak maliciously;
All that discourteously refuse
To press their goblet's mouth of wine,
When he shall give as toast divine,
His Ladye-love, the loveliest of the Nine —
 Dark-veiled Melpomene !

For Beauty — be it in
 A bluebell's or a woman's eyes,
 A rose's or a maiden's lips in bloom,
 A forest, waving like a helmet plume,
Or the soft tintings of the sunset skies —
He has a soul that claims the chance
To blunt a sword or to break a lance.

Beauty's champion, he is Virtue's too;
For are not grace and goodness sisters twin?
Virtue is a beauty that within
Sheds radiance without, as does a light
Through the windows of a room at night,
Or flowers, breathing from a vase,
 Or jewels from their case.

He loves all forms of loveliness,
 And Nature sits within him like a heart,
Ruling with magic tenderness.
 The air-winged birds that dart
Up the blue staircase of the porphyry clouds;
The Autumn-fingered foliage that shrouds

A sleeping churchyard, or the evening dim,
Stalking majestically down
Upon the noisy and mast-fringed town,
Or the winged and ever restless ships,
Or the murmuring of Ocean's lips,
Are everlasting joys to him;
For he is one whose bosom doubted never
"A thing of beauty" is "a joy forever."

His war-cry shall be heard;
It is that mystic word
Which, on a banner in the twilight brown,
A youth once carried thro' an Alpine town —
Excelsior!

A CHRISTMAS CHIME

THE GUESTS,

*And what the strange old man does in the old house
every Christmas night*

"All houses-wherein men have lived and died,
Are haunted houses." — LONGFELLOW.

THE angels bend in heaven's arch to-night,
And sprinkle snowflakes on the city's streets;
The wind moans round the chimney-tops in fright
And sprightly hail taps every one it meets.

The lamps that stud the white and pearlèd way,
Glare like mad demons thro' the blinding storm;
Shop windows watch the snow sprites as they play,
Or throw their rays upon each passing form.

'Tis Christmas night; and while from street to street,
The echo hurries, like a startled mouse,
And phantom laughs are mingling with the sleet,
An Old Man sits within an olden house.

The house is quaint, odd-fashioned, and antique;
Grim Time has passed his palm across the roof
And left it wrinkled! 'Tis so dark and bleak
At twilight play the children keep aloof.

There's not a sound in all its sombre halls,
And brooding silence sits upon the stair;
One can most see the "quiet as it crawls"
Along the entry through the biting air.

Why sits the Old Man in the big old room,
Watching the hearth-light o'er the mouldings climb?
The man and chamber in its ghostly gloom
Seem things forgotten in the flight of time.

Why sits he thus beside the wide-mouthed hearth?
Does he call up sweet forms that, like the leaves,
Have mixed with flowers in the wombed earth?
Or does he hear the hail upon the eaves?

The jingling sleigh-bells in the street below,
The goblin sleet that droppeth down the flue,
The huntsman wind that whistles to the snow —
Are these the noises that he listens to?

Or does he catch the echoes of the Past,
Like fine vibrations of a distant bell?
Do memories fall on him thick and fast
As hail without upon the snowy swell?

I wot not either; but the Old Man seems
A link between this mortal life and death —
A dreamy pilgrim to the Land of Dreams,
His life, a feather balanced on a breath.

He bends his head; he hears the panels creak;
Then by the chimney leaves his cushioned chair;
And, with a joy his moistened eyelids speak,
He draws three seats beside his own with care.

He holds his hands out, as if to grasp
Some other hands; he sighs and smiles and sighs;
Now stands as if within some loving clasp —
His eyes intently gaze in other eyes!

And now he points his phantom guests their seats.
He heaps fresh fuel upon the fireplace;
And all is still, save one quick heart that beats
In yonder clock, within its coffin case.

O, what a queer Old Man! And does he see
Ethereal spirits seated in those chairs?
Do souls come back from God's eternity
To mingle with us and our daily cares?

I do believe it! and 'tis grand to feel
That, when the breezes lift our fevered hair,
Some friend's hand does it, and at ev'ry meal
The loved are near us, round us like the air!

I do believe they're with us all the day,
And o'er our holier hours vigils keep;
That they kneel with us when we kneel to pray,
And bend above us when we fall asleep.

But see, he smiles! O sure some airy one
Has twined a sunbeam round his parted lips;
He hears a voice, a voice for him alone —
We hear it not, nor see the ghost that trips

Around the arm-chair of the dreamy man.
A lip intangible his own lip nears;
It falls so kindly on his thin cheek wan,
The Old Man weeps, and slumbers in his tears.

And every year when holy Christmas comes,
He draws those chairs within the hearthstone
gleams,
And fondly all his viewless household sums,
Then falls asleep 'mid kisses, tears, and dreams.

EUDELE

THE soft wind moved the curtain's fold,
And rippled her gold waves of hair,
While like some voiceless lily's lip,
Touched by a gentle whiff of air,
Moved as by inward melody,
Her lips were trembling with a prayer,
Which lark-like soared from out this world of sin.
"To-morrow," and she raised her eyes,
"I'll walk with Christ in Paradise."
And thro' the window came the Twilight in.

The soft wind moved the curtain's fold,
And cooled her cheek with kisses faint;
And as she lay upon the bed,
The curls that clustered o'er her head
Were like the halo of a saint.

A light was breaking on her lips,
 Like that which tinges mountain tips
 At death of August days;
 While with her on the pillow lay
 The golden parasites of day —
 The sunset's amber rays.
 The flowers closed their eyelids up;
 The harebell and the buttercup,
 The tulip and the sun-struck jessamine.
 With whispered sighs and dainty feet,
 The evening zephyrs tripped about;
 Then, as a flower yields its sweet,
 A pure spirit flitted out,
 And thro' the window came the Twilight in.

We hid her in a green retreat,
 With daisies at her head and feet,
 To guard her with sweet eyes;
 And when we weep Eudele as dead,
 We smile to think of what she said
 Of "Christ" and "Paradise" —
 Of that far sphere where neither sin
 Nor sombre Twilight enter in.

DRIP, DRIP, DRIP

A RAINY DAY LYRIC

ALL through that dreariest day,
 Out of the window-pane
 We gazed, but our eyes could see
 The rain, — nothing but rain.
 Drip, drip, drip,
 It said to the sullen eaves;

Drip, drip, drip,
And danced upon the leaves.

The flowers that clomb the porch,
Violets like the skies,
Grew as dreamy and dim as
A tearful maiden's eyes.

Drip, drip, drip,
It said to the sullen eaves;
Drip, drip, drip,
And trembled on the leaves.

A thrill, like a thrill of joy,
Ran through the fields of grain;
And they bowed their heads beneath
The blessing of the rain!

Drip, drip, drip,
It said to the sullen eaves;
Drip, drip, drip,
And danced upon the leaves.

The barn grew solemn and brown,
The whitewashed fence and wall;
And the "poplars" at the gate
Looked odd, and grim, and tall.

Drip, drip, drip,
It said to the sullen eaves;
Drip, drip, drip,
And trembled on the leaves.

When seated around the hearth —
The evening meal was through —
We could hear the cunning rain
Come singing down the flue.

Drip, drip, drip,
It said to the sullen eaves;
Drip, drip, drip,
And danced upon the leaves.

And when we went to our beds,
Still we could hear the rain;
It tried the kitchen door, and
Spit on the window-pane!
Drip, drip, drip,
It said to the sullen eaves;
Drip, drip, drip,
And trembled on the leaves.

Still does it haunt our dreams, that
Weariest, dreary rain,
That came from the mouths of clouds,
To bless the golden grain!
Drip, drip, drip,
It says to the sullen eaves;
Drip, drip, drip,
And trembles on the leaves.

TOUSOULIA

A LEGEND OF THE MOHEGAN

THE Juniata rippled at her feet,
And like a fallen giant lay the sun
Aslant the silent trees. Tousoulia
Was sad. The maiden had been waiting through
Three crescent moons; had marked them orb and go,
Like dreamy Houris, down the stairs of night
To bathe in mists behind the purple hills;

And yet her Indian warrior came
Not back

Thus to the stream that wandered by,
Thus to the meadows of the coming night
Tousoulia made her moan:

"The autumn has been breathing on the leaves,
And burnt them into redness with her lips;
And I am sadder than the Whip-po-will.

"The summer birds have floated to the south;
My lonely heart is vacant as their nests —
It shall be empty till my Chief comes home!

"There are no footfalls that can make me glad,
There are no warblings of the lover's lute,
At eventide, outside the wigwam door.

"No tender hands caress me as they used;
Only the lips of moonbeams kiss my breast;
And I am sadder than the Whip-po-will.

"When wilt thou come? and is the trail so long,
Three moons must stalk between thee and thy bride?
She waits for thee as eagerly, Lenape,

"As Earth for Spring to kiss it into buds!
The Bending Lily yearns for him who will
Make her as happy as a humming-bird!"

And softly with her foot she stirred
A clump of water-lilies, and then grew as mute
As moulting robins.

Like a lark that skims
The outer surface of cerulian
Clouds, shot a canoe from out the shadow
Of the trailing trees; and, like a bloodhound
On its mistress' knee, it placed its long head
On the beach. Another and another,
And a third; while from them leaped a score of
Painted braves.

So softly came they, the Mohegan girl
Perceived them not till some dry branches cracked
Beneath their feet; then, springing up, she threw
Her arms around the neck of him who stalked
Majestically as a king — 'twas not
Lenape. All rich with blushes she drew back
And, at a distance, followed them into
The Indian village.

The Council fire
Leaped high that night; a scalping party that
Had been three moons away, came opulent
In deeds and trophies back. And there were
Praises and welcomings for the returned,
Wailings and wild sorrowings for the dead.

The hungry fire was fed with brushwood; high
Into the night its flaming arms were stretched
Like one in prayer. Without the reaches of
Its radiancy stood Tousoulia,
With heart as full of tears as a cloud in
April time.

Each warrior told his
Own exploits with a wild eloquence; then
As the calm of stagnant winds before the

Lightning, with its fiery finger, pricks
The swollen cloud, and deluges the earth
With most delicious tears, a silence fell
Upon the plumed and dusky throng. Then, like
The moanings of a distant ocean, broke
Upon a hundred swarthy lips the name
Of all names that Tousoulia loved.

War Eagle rose; the hair had fallen from
His aged head as leaves from the grand oak
In autumn winds. With a big heart he spoke:

"When the Great Father scalps the forest trees,
And we have laid our store of bear meat in,
Our young men must take panther skins and corn
To Nemhaw's wigwam, for he hath no son!"

The speaker paused, and thro' the stillness trilled
A laugh so fearful that the couchant braves
Sprang to their feet; the sleepy watch curs howled,
And frightened squaws drew nearer to the fire.
Tousoulia pressing through the wildered
Throng, stood by the crackling fire scornfully.

"The great Mohegan is not dead!" she cried.
"I hear the paddles of his bark canoe
Afar, afar!" She paused like one that hears
A sound i' the distance. "He will come. I'll wait
For him. He pants beneath the weight of scalps!
The great Mohegan is not dead!"

Alas! in the too sudden shock of woe, her brain
Had lost its equipoise, and her mind went
Wandering, like a bird whose nest has been
Destroyed.

Through weary length of autumn
Days, she sat beside the Juniata
Trailing her feet, the livelong day, among
The globes of water-lilies, and 'twas thus
She made her moan unto the listening wood,
And to the mouthing wind, and to the stream
Whose voice was like the music of her own:

“When wilt thou come? and is the trail so long,
Three moons must stalk between thee and thy bride,
Whose heart is empty as a last year's nest?”

And to this day the spot is pointed out
Where sat the maniac girl, and saw three
Summers drop in leafy graves, waiting for
Him who never, never came to make her
“Happy as a humming-bird.”

A MADRIGAL

'MONG Nellie's curls I saw a rose to-night,
And I was vexed that I was not a rose,
A captive chained with ebon chains like those,
Silken and soft, and beautifully bright.

And then I wished myself the diamond speck
That glittered on the berth of her dress,
To tremble on the brink of loveliness,
To kiss the tempting whiteness of her neck.

And when I saw that saucy little foot
Peeping from 'neath her skirts with Sylph-like
grace,
She must have read the wish upon my face,
The silly wish that I'd been born a *boot*!

I MIGHT HAVE BEEN

"I MIGHT have been" 's a weary lay
Too often sung, and foolishly.
With deeper care on heart and brain,
More sorrowful and full of pain
 You might have been,
 You might have been —
 Thank God for what you are!

You might have won a poet's crown,
And swayed the Janus-faced town,
Wringing applauses from all men;
But *purer* you might not have been,
 Might not have been;
 Truer you might not have been —
 Thank God for what you are!

The gentle hand that clasps your own,
The lips that sway you with a tone,
Death might have chilled. Go not alone,
Like the complaining rain, and moan
 "I might have been,
 I might have been," —
 Thank God for what you are!

I have a prayer; 'tis not to crave
Exemption from a nameless grave,
Nor fame to stamp me with its seal;
'Tis that I may, when o'er me steal
 The thoughts of what I might have been,
 The thoughts of what I might have been,
 Thank God for what I am.

* * * * *

I

As falls a ray of transient golden light
Through half-shut blinds upon the darkened floor,
And leaving, turns the twilight into night,
Making the shadows deeper than before:

II

So through the darkened windows of my heart
Stole the warm, transient sunshine of thy love,
Then left me darkness. O! thy cruel art
Hath made me colder than a marble Jove.

III

Think how cold! when I can meet thy glances
Nor feel the blood pulp warmer in my veins;
Time, Iconoclast! hath broke my fancies!
Memory, still a captive, is in chains.

IV

. . . I know the ever restless thought
That reigns within thee; that thy dark eyes wear
A calm that happiness has never brought —
A Resignation, sister to Despair.

V

Not do I view thee as the passing throng;
The surface pleases them: they do not probe;
I see thy woes in wit, and laugh, and song,
Like rotting monarchs in their ermine robe.

VI

We are not married, and yet not unwed;
 Unwed in joy, in sorrow we are one;
 Though far apart, together we will tread
 A path thro' life the twilight falls upon.

VII

The twilight's on our faces, and our lives
 Are but the echoes of one saddened tune.
 Joy sank; grief rose, all passions *that* survives —
 The night outlives its little silver moon.

TWO CITIES

"There are two worlds about us,
 Two worlds in which we dwell —
 Within us and about us." — R. H. STODDARD .

'Twas dusk, and from my window
 Upon the street below
 I saw the people passing,
 Like shadows, to and fro;

And faintly, very faintly
 I heard the ceasing din;
 And like the dusk without me
 There was a dusk within.

And thoughts with eager footsteps,
 Dim thoughts of joy and pain,
 Filled the streets and by-ways of
 The city in my brain.

A passing light and holy
 Like that which softly falls

Through open gates in cloudlets
Upon cathedral walls,

Fell upon the towers of
The city in my mind;
My inward sight grew clearer
My outward vision blind.

Forgotten was the window;
There seemed no street below,
I did not see them passing,
The shadows, to and fro.

I was between Two Cities
In which my spirit dwells;
And I could hear the chimings
Of two sad sets of bells

Without the holy Trinity's;
And deep within my soul,
My heart was throbbing like a bell
When it has ceased to toll!

THE NIGHT WIND

I FEEL like weeping when the dismal Wind
Talks to the chimney of an Autumn night —
So strangely talks with meaning undefined —
Or scolds the forest till it shrinks in fright,
And with its lips of leaves, all terror white,
Begs of the breeze to treat it less unkind.

To-night, before the supper lamps were lit,
The poor Wind whistled such a doleful tune

My eyelids swelled like rain-fed clouds in June;
I drew my arm-chair near the hearth, to sit
And form the embers into figures quaint;
I fancied Vikings, bridges, castles drear;
But ah! that Wind, now growing loud, now faint,
Hung like a guilty conscience on my ear.

IMORE

A LEGEND OF THE MINSTREL TIMES

ONE day while sitting in the dim old woods,
Charmed with the braided notes of brooks and birds,
Sleep stole upon him like a pleasant thought.
His head was pillowed upon violets,
And lilies stood on tip-toe to his lips.
As thus he slept, an angel dropped among
The flowerets, the Lady Volant and
The Earl went by and saw him slumbering;
And ever after in the maiden's dream,
Was Imore sleeping by the rivulet.

Ah, he beheld her on that summer day
Through the sly openings of his roguish eyes;
And she was queenly as a budded moon!
Peerless as she whose nectared kisses cost
Mark Antony a kingdom! And he turned
From gay to sad, and haunted the old wood;
His cheeks grew pale as lilies in a rill;
He sang no longer like a morning lark,
But hummed around the lindens like a bee.

Once Lady Volant loved to sit and watch
From Odenwald's high tower, the red sun

Folding his purple pinions for the eve,
And the clear stars that cluster thick upon
The arch of night, like watery diamonds
On a ring of jet. But now she strayed far
In the leafy glens, and plucking roses,
Warm with the parting kiss that sunset gives,
Came melancholy with the twilight home.

One eve as she was roving thro' the glade,
She found the minstrel sleeping as before
Upon a couch of violets — as once
Diana found Endymion asleep,
Loving him ever after — and from out
His parted lips his breath came like the breath
Of hyacinths. Then whispered Volant
Softly to herself, "Methinks I could such
Honeyed sweetness from those full lips draw, as
Does a bee from the sweet honeysuckle.
Now by the blood that circles in these veins
And prompts me in this sweet delicious freak!
I'll taste them, and if he awakes I'll swear
That 'twas some spirit kissed him in his dream,
Not I; that I'm the daughter of an earl
And would not stoop to press a common lip:
Then I'll sweep by, majestic as the Night."

Then, like a rainbow, she bent over him,
With all the hues of autumn on her cheeks.
Raising the fringed curtains of his eyes,
He threw both arms around her snowy neck
And punished her with kisses! She drew back
With angered orbs; then blushed, then thro' the wood
Leaped the silvery echoes of her laugh.

And then she called him "cruel, cruel boy,"
And asked him if the bluebells did not close
Their eyes with envy, when he looked at them;
And then she laid her hand among his curls.
The evening melted, and night found them there —
Cupid and Psyche wooing in a wood!

"There is a clime," he said, "a far-off land
Of orange bowers and magnolia trees,
With streams of goldfish gurgling 'mong the hills;
Where winter never throws a pall upon
The sweet-lipped flowerets, and May and June
Go, hand in hand, throughout the livelong year!"

Softly at night she left the castle gate
To wander with the minstrel to that land
Of never dying summer and blue skies.
They wandered off, and never more were seen
By any swineherd of those dewy dells,
Nor by the Dryads, nor the Fauns, nor Fays,
Nor any of the sylvan train that dwell
By the cool fountains of that haunted wood.

FOREVER AND FOREVER

AN IMITATION

SWEET Nea held her hand in mine,
Beside us rolled the river;
"Wilt thou love me, Nea?" and she said,
"Forever and forever."

And when the roses blushed again
I stood beside that river,

But Nea, darling! she was gone
Forever and forever.

She went with blossoms in the spring,
And shall I see her never?
Ah, yes! for those who love, love on
Forever and forever.

“There is another better world,”
Where pain and death are never;
There she and I shall live and love
Forever and forever.

A NEST OF SONNETS

I. The Little Witches at the Crossings

THESE imps of Want! these sprites of Poverty!
That flock the crossways of the muddy town
With brooms at ev'ry rain, whence come they, pray?
Spring they from earth, or do they tumble down,
Like animalculæ, in drops of rain?
How phantom-like they move about the street!
Are they dwarf Gnomes fresh from some cavern's
brain,
Like those in Arab legends? Can hearts beat
In such odd creatures? Are they more than breath?
Look at those skinny outstretched hands! Why, they
Are spectral as the Witches in Macbeth!
Drop them a coin, pedestrian, thus may
You win their good-will, which were best to own,
Since heaven can tell what elfs these are alone.

II. Phœbus

DEW-DAPPLED Phœbus, with half-shaded eye,
Stalks through the portals of the eastern skies;
The stars that drop above the world on high,
Beneath his gaze close their cloud-lidded eyes;
He taps the dreaming city till it wakes
And hums and murmurs like an o'ertuned hive;
With twit'ring birds the forest is alive,
And bends to see its shadow in the lakes!
In toying wavelets the soft zephyr breaks,
Bearing the perfume from the gummy pines;
Flowers, the drinking-cups of the god-sun,
Are brimmed with dew. His touch incarnadines
The dank hilltops, and all it falls upon —
The reeling grain fields and the streams that run.

III. The Night Rain

PITEOUS Rain! O how it sobs without!
Driven from Heaven like a sinning child,
Thrust from the Gates by scolding winds and wild,
It wanders weary, drearily about.
At me it peereth through the window-panes,
And almost asks if I would let it in —
I'm not proclivous, weeping child of sin.
Then off it speeds and curses and complains;
Its footfalls sound with quick and nervous beat
On dismal miles of dimly lighted street.
It pauses oft, as if its tim'rous ear
Had caught a sound — 'twas only sighing leaves —
Then rushes onward with a trembling fear,
And seeks to hide beneath protruding eaves.

IV. "*Thanatopsis*"

WHEN one can die with the proud consciousness
That he will 'bide forever with the world,
And that when monarchs and their broods are hurled
Contemptuous down Oblivion's abyss,
He will span time like heaven's bow: God! this
Must set his blood to boiling, and with bliss
Fill his king-heart up to the very brim!
Yet do I know of a sublimer joy
Possessing which I would not envy him —
O faith! the alchemist that turns th' alloy
Of death to golden calm. 'Tis when the soul,
Uncaged, goes singing lark-like thro' the spheres
Confidingly to God, devoid of fears,
Having on earth paid Paradise its toll!

V. *Noon*

HE'S chosen the broad zenith for his seat;
His brow is sweaty, and his sultry breath
Fills the sick town, and in the crowded street
Men and o'erladen horses sink in death;
In rocky, dewless pastures, close beneath
The arms of trees the drowsy cattle meet;
The grain grows dry within its heated sheath;
Wild lilacs droop upon the sunny steep,
And winds in knolls have stol'n away to sleep.
A sense of something heavy spheres the air —
As if the earth lay in a horrid trance,
While through the still blue heaven with a stare
The Noon-king looketh, scorching with his glance,
Proud as a lion glaring from his lair.

VI. To —

On his being Unjustly Criticised

'Tis ever so, my friend, when one would climb
 The rounds of his ambition up to fame,
 And write, in blotless characters, his name
 Upon the unrolled manuscript of Time.
 There are some men who, as he 'tempts to rise,
 Will envy him the wreath their fate denies,
 And seek to wound him with their shafts of scorn.
 There're many such that mark thee on thy way.
 Teach them this lesson, friend: He that is born
 For greatness *will* be great! and enmity
 Cannot *unmake* a Poet. — Did the thorn
 That cut the brow of Jesus make him less?

* * * * * *

ELEGIAC

HE never wed with thoughts of death
 Worm-eaten hearts and nighty pall,
 Nor mystery, like the writings of
 The firelight's finger on the wall:

'Twas but to sink in fibred earth;
 To go where buds and blossoms go
 In winter time, to rest; then bloom
 Through summers of eternal flow.

He wrested nobly with his fate,
 And strove to mask his soul's distress;
 He passed, a spectre, through the gate
 Of death alone and shadowless.

He was to me most like a stream
Which, in some darkened vein of earth
Flows thro' its rocky bowels, but
To daylight never bubbles forth.

BERTHABELL

WHERE an ivy vine is creeping,
And tears of dewdrops weeping,
They tell me thou art sleeping,
Berthabell!

I have often sat alone
And read on the dark gray stone,
With green mosses overgrown,
"Berthabell."

I *know* we laid thee there,
With thy forehead cold and fair!
But now thou art elsewhere,
Berthabell!

Thy soul stole forth in flowers,
That fainted 'neath the showers
On thy grave, in April hours,
Berthabell!

O! I never more will come
And be weeping at this tomb;
It is all too full of gloom,
Berthabell!

I would rather seek the glade
Where the willows throw their shade,

Where our shattered vows were made,
Berthabell!

I will watch the willow swing,
I will hear the streamlet sing,
And kind memory will bring
Berthabell!

ABOUT A TINY GIRL

IDA, look me in the eyes!
Place your tiny lips on mine,
Rest one arm upon my brow,
Round my neck the other twine.

Did you leave your house of blocks
And the toy that pleases thee?
Did you see me sad and wan
That you clomb upon my knee,
Kissing me so tenderly?

Did your finer sense perceive
Something of unhappiness?
Did your inner vision see
What the others did not guess,
That you clomb upon my knee,
Kissing with such tenderness?

"Ida loves you very much,"
Don't I know it, dainty one?
There is not a single curl,
Tiny curls, like beams of sun!
Reeling from that busy head,
Floating as a golden charm,

That I would not give my hand,
Or my life to save from harm.

Ida, look me in the eyes!
Place your tiny lips on mine,
Rest one arm upon my brow,
Round my neck the other twine.

THE GENTLE HAND

WHERE trips the blue Piscataqua along in maiden
glee,
And throws herself upon the breast of her old lover —
Sea,
I stood one August sunset with a gentle hand in
mine, —
The sunbeams pouring in the deep like streams of
yellow wine.

Upon our right the old Fort stood, forbidding as a
frown,
And half within its shadow lay the little dingy town;
And here and there along the shore the fishing smacks
were hauled,
While boats, like lazy turtles, up and down the river
crawled!

The Lighthouse with its eye of fire looked o'er the
breakers swell,
Standing all calm and solemn, like some watchful
sentinel;
And o'er the undulating lands our stretching eyes
would mark
Old Portsmouth's spires tapering up halfway to meet
the dark.

Low at our feet the ocean broke in long and frothy
rolls,
And like a gem upon its breast we saw the Isle of
Shoals!

O! dear to me the Fort, the town, the dimpled ocean's
moan,

But dearer was the gentle hand I held within my own!

Like a lion that is wounded, but in scorn disdains to
groan,

Creeps to some secretest cavern there to bleed and die
alone,

The sun in sullen majesty was creeping to his lair,
His jagged sides a-panting and his red eyeballs a-glare.

The lovely moon, like Cypris, rose from out the jewelled
sea,

And laid her lily hand upon the Lighthouse on the lee;
And touched the rocky bastion and the ramparts of the
Fort,

And ran along the sleepy guns that gaped from ev'ry
port.

It was a moon that might have lured the Mermaids
from their caves,

From out the glaucous grottos of their realms be-
neath the waves,

To sit upon the sloping strand and comb from out
their hair

The seaweed, and to have a chat with loving Mermen
there.

O! dear to me the Fort and town asleep in light
divine;

But dearer than the landscape was the hand I held in
mine!

In brilliant, starry necklaces and bridal sheen ar-
rayed,
The Moon stood out in heaven like a pale unwilling
maid;
She loved the dewy Morning with his yellow curls of
light;
She's doomed to wed another and to be the bride of
Night.
I whispered this to Lillie as she turned her eyes above;
“ 'Tis sad,” she said, “ 'tis very sad to wed not where
we love.”

The hand I pressed too ardently was drawn away from
mine,
And eyes were turned toward me all bewitchingly
divine;
I dared to take that hand again and soothe it in my
own;
I dared to steal my arm around a half reluctant zone;
I told her how the waters kissed the islands in their
sport,
And — we neither saw the Lighthouse, the islands,
nor the Fort !

THE THREE CONCEITS

[PRELUDE AFTER TENNYSON]

It happened on a summer day that Hall
And Walter Everland, a young poet,
And Arthur Thornburn and my humble self,
Were in a churchyard near th' Academy,
Reading odd epitaphs. And tired out,
We stretched ourselves beneath the wedded boughs,

Of some tall lindens by the river side,
Cheating the laggard moments of their prey
Of weariness in drawing similes
From clouds, and trees, and rocks. Each one in turn,
Putting some question to the other three.
Thus when to me the lot of querist fell:

"What is this graveyard like?" Then Hall replied,
 "*'Tis like a beehive with the bees*
Dead in their cells!" And we grew solemn as
The shadows of the linden trees.

"What is this graveyard like?" And Arthur said,
 Resting his eyes upon the tombs,
 "*These bodies, lacking souls and tenantless,*
 Are like so many empty rooms!"

"What is this graveyard like?" And Walter said,
 "*A flower garden where are sown*
By Christ the seeds of many flowerets
 To blossom Resurrection Morn!"

And then we smiled, and placed upon his head
With loving hands a daisy wreath.
Who looks in the mild eyes of *Faith*, can draw
Sweet fancies from the realm of Death.

The twilight coming on us, we arose;
They to their studies went, I to my room
To think of those three quaint conceits, but most
Of Walter's; and I dropt asleep with his
Sweet fancy folded in my heart, and have
Felt nearer God and Heaven ever since.

EPIGRAMMATICAL

SIR CRITICUS just made a caustic hit,
Though Criticus has not a whit of wit.
"These are my 'Bells,'" said I. The critic took
The volume with a condescending look,
And ran his fingers o'er it here and there,
As schoolboys o'er a rainbow-colored map;
"The Bells," quoth he; then grappling with a thought,
"Now, by the gods! Sir, you should have a 'cap.'
You may believe, Sir, what your critic tells,
You long have merited 'a cap and bells'!"

TO SUE

WRITTEN ONE RAINY NIGHT

"The Past is with me, and I scarcely hear
Outside the weeping of the homeless rain."

THE cottage and the mill, Sue, that crazy talking mill
Whose hand caresses carelessly the wanton, romping
rill!

The olden bridge above, and the music flow beneath;
The eddies, and the stars that came to join the water-
wreath;

The trains from distant towns, Sue, whose shriekings
startle night;

That looming factory hard by with window eyes of
light;

The graveyard near the Oaks, Sue, the breezes and
their sighs;

The clouds that read the epitaphs with their dilating
eyes!

The ruined Fort that stands, Sue, and frowns so in
the night
Where meets Piscataqua and toys with Ocean's lips of
white;
The moonlight walks we've had and the walks without
the moon,
Thro' woods stuck full of rosy eyes by airy-ankled
June!

The gleaming of your eyes, Sue, the floating of your
hair,
The echoes of your lips that trill and faint upon the
air,
They all come back to-night, Sue, they all come back
to-night;
My eyes behold the dusty Past and Memory holds the
light.

The unforgiving winds, Sue, torment the tender rain;
A storm's without, I heed it not — I'm with you once
again!

ANACREONTIC

I

THE gleam that lies
In Fannie's eyes,
And vainly tries to hide its glow,
Has scarce to me
More witchery
Than that within my chalice now.
The bubbles rise and wink like eyes,
Like woman's eyes divinely glow!

II

Come let me press thy ruby lips,
My Goblet! lips of wine!
Glide through my soul and flood my brain
With images divine!
Who would not kiss
A lip like this
Since every kiss a care dispels?
Each sweeter far
Than dewdrops are,
Or honey in the lily-bells.

III

Mythology! By heaven there is
No heathen god but one!
My vine-browed Bacchus, purple-mouthed!
Astride his royal tun!
I am to-night
His proselyte,
And wrong or right I'll crown him king;
And I will quaff
A song, a laugh
From each fresh bowl our Hebes bring.

IV

When dark-eyed Grief would fill my eyes
With tears unto the brim,
The Lethe of my woe I find
Beneath this goblet's rim.
O! who would wear
A brow of care

When we can share a cup like this?
 What eye should grow
 Downcast with woe
 When wine can pack a heart with bliss?

v

Fate knows when we may meet again,
 My merrie friends and true;
 Then let's dissolve our souls in Hock
 As clouds dissolve in dew.
 Come let us press those ruby lips,
 Our goblet's lips of wine!
 And flood our souls and throng our brains
 With images divine!
 Who would not kiss
 A lip like this
 Since every kiss a care dispels?
 Each sweeter far
 Than dewdrops are
 Or honey in the lily-bells!

WITH THE STARS AND THE STRIPES
 AROUND HIM.

"We found him as he had fallen from his horse, his sword still firmly grasped in his hand, and the flag he had died defending, drawn across his breast. He looked as though he had gone to sleep, expecting every moment to be roused by a call to arms. There was not a clear eye among us when one of his friends severed two ringlets from the many that clustered on his forehead, to "send home" to his mother and betrothed. He was buried as he was found—the flag, the sword, the soldier, in one grave!"—*Letters from the Rio Grande.*

LET him lie i' the dark narrow grave you have made,
 Let him lie, as when dead, you found him;

Let him sleep with his hand on the dinted blade,
 And the stars and the stripes around him!
 But first cut a lock from his long chestnut hair
 For one that the hero left weeping;
 And another "send home," and with them tell where
 The son and the lover are sleeping.

When long winter nights, at the home of his birth,
 Are shortened with legend and story,
 Some voice in the household will tell of his worth,
 And speak of his death and his glory;
 And fancy will picture the place where he sleeps,
 Beside him the blue winding river,
 The long sloping flats where the chaparral sweeps,
 And Summer breathes softly forever.

The mother will weep as she thinks of "her boy,"
 The ties that so tenderly bound him;
 But the lad at her side will think 'twere a joy
 To sleep with a banner around him!
 And she, the dark-eyed and beautiful one,
 Who waited so long for her lover,
 Will fall asleep tearful, and dream until morn
 Of the joys and the love-meetings over.

When another shall kneel at the feet of the fair
 To win her with sighs and with vowing,
 She'll tell him her heart, as he pleading kneels there,
 Is tombed where a river is flowing.
 The ringlet you cut from the pale marble brow
 Of our comrade, warrior-hearted,
 She'll press to her lips, and remember her vow
 Of faith to the dear one departed.

Lead the war-horse back to the cool hazel-hurst
Where the wild Merrimack is roving;
When his eye grows dim he'll be tenderly nurst
By those that will never cease loving.
Lead the war-horse back! There's a horrible stain
On the saddle-seat, ah, and gory!
'Tis the heart's blood of one for his Country slain —
Death, death is the price of all glory!

Let him sleep by the wave of the Rio Grande
With no proud sculptured urn above him,
There are tablets enough in his own dear land,
The sorrowing, sad hearts that love him.
Let him lie i' the dark narrow grave you have made,
Let him lie as when dead, you found him.
Let him sleep with his hand on the dinted blade
And the stars and the stripes around him!

THE LACHRYMOSE

“Beauty still walketh on the earth and air,
Our present sunsets are as rich in gold
As ere the Iliad's music was out-rolled.”

THIS World's as beautiful to-day as when
It dropped fresh from the fingers of a God!
The Philomel makes heavenly the night,
And Roses bring a blush to earth's great cheeks
Each summer time. The sun has not grown dim.
The same wild breezes sweep our Southern vales,
And wake rough music on th' Atlantic's wave
That brushed the dewdrop from the crocus leaf
In Eden's solitude. I cannot see
That earth is tired out, and wrinkled like
An aged face; that it has fallen in

The "sere and yellow leaf." I think that it
Is vastly young, and destined yet to swing
Some thirty thousand centuries in air!

Perdition catch those lachrymosic bards
That moan forever about weary earth
And sea! as if their dismal dactyles could
Improve it much. There is one poet who
Has risen up like a great rocket with
A burst of stars, *he's* going to "tinker" it!
Kind heaven help him! 'twere a pretty job!
For my own part I am content if I
Can tinker joy, making it waterproof
To keep out Tears! As to all theories
And schism and the like, I do bequeath
Them unto learned heads. A Poet can
Do much by writing purely, but far more
By living as he writes. Who would reform
The world, let him reform himself, teaching
By example more than precept.

Now I,
Who am no Bard, but a mere poetling,
A "ballad monger" stringing fancies on
A thread of rhyme, a literary bee
Humming round the world and drawing sweetness
From it, I — a poet be it written
Of the ephemeral sort, who, dying,
Would be missed about as much as yonder
Butterfly — do not think myself better
Than my neighbor, but I've faith enough to
Trust the unseen hands that toss the ocean
Up, those hands that garner whirlwinds i' the air,
With tinkering this leaky world.

THE OLD HOUSE¹

THE Old House stands alone,
A queer and crumbling pile,
And though its shattered gables tell —
Faintly, like the pulses of a bell —
Of days and years, mayhap of centuries flown,
I cannot help but smile.

The Old House stands alone,
Over the windows and the oaken door,
There's something in the mouldings that's so quaint;
No knocker rings upon those panels more;
Some urchin wrung it off!
In these degenerate days an urchin is no saint,
But dares to laugh and scoff
At things that bear the holy taint,
And impress of the Past.

Its windows boast not one whole pane of glass;
And tho' it pains me, let it still be said
That I have broken many a square, alas!
My heart has since my reparation made.
I'm grieving now I ever threw a stone;
They used to graze the damp discolored walls,
And wake the sleeping echo in the halls
And *that* would go from room to room and moan.
Besides, the windows always blushed so red,
When Sunset stooped to catch the winged gulls,
Or stripped him, shameless, for his ocean bed;
But now they seem like eyeless skulls
Of some poor mortals dead!

¹ The mansion of the late Theodore Atkinson, Court Street, Portsmouth, N.H.

That structure seems ideal!
There's such an indistinctness in its form,
I sometimes doubt if really it be real.
So oft its roof hath felt the drenching storm,
So oft it has been danced upon by hail,
That *contour* seems washed out!
And when I view it, 'tis with half a doubt,
As dimly through a veil.

That ancient House might tell a startling tale
Could its cracked wainscots and dark closets speak;
A tale to make the laughing lip turn pale
And send the heart's blood bubbling to the cheek.
Ere I was born, when my grandsire was young,
A legend curious, rather wild withal,
Around that lonely mansion hung;
And at some future time,
Should I possess the quantity of rhyme,
That legend shall be sung.

Those chambers drear, deserted save by storms,
Shall hear again the pleading Lover's sigh;
I'll clutch the Past! bring back its phantom forms,
And light with passion many an orbless eye.
From disused graveyards of this dear old town,
I'll drag the helpless and long slumbering dead;
With plumes I'll deck full many a fleshless head,
With clanking spurs full many a fleshless heel;
Marshal the dead in some undying fight,
Robe them in silks as if for banquet night —
The flippant Fop, the Warrior in his steel!

* * * * *

O, let me tell thee one thing, trembling House!
That in thy days of former pomp gone by,

When light feet danced where crawls secure the mouse,
And thy bare walls were hung with drapery —
I tell thee truly — when thy haunted halls
Were scenes of Bridal, Birth, and Revelry,
And Funeral wails resounded in thy walls,
None in those hours of pain and joy gone by
Could love thee then more fondly now than I.

MY HIGHLAND MARY

How sweetly comes the picture now! —
The breathless wood, that August noon,
When 'mong the panting leaves you sang
"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon"!
The very streamlets, gurgling low,
On happy ways did tarry,
And whispering zephyrs ceased their sighs
To hear my Highland Mary!

And when the evening touched the trees,
And we turned homeward, you and I,
I blush to own "a body" kissed
"A body," "Coming thro' the Rye"!
The very streamlets, gurgling low,
On happy ways did tarry,
And whispering zephyrs ceased their sighs
To hear my Highland Mary!

Was ever moon more milky white,
Did ever stream have softer swells,
Than when at Sagamore I heard
The music of *"Those Evening Bells"!*
Ah, memory calls each cadence back

And trembles with a dim delight;
 And Fancy listens till it hears
 The warblings of that "*Stilly Night*"!
 The very streamlets, gurgling low,
 On happy ways did tarry,
 And whispering zephyrs ceased their sighs
 To hear my Highland Mary!

TWILIGHT IDYL

I

How softly comes the Evening down
 And weds the vapors of the town!
 Bending o'er its tumult wild
 As above her restless child
 Bends the mother, singing lowly
 Some refrain of melancholy.

II

Voices heard at twilight hour
 Have a deep, a touching power;
 Distant sounds seem clearer, nearer,
 And the Dead are nearer, dearer!
 Forms and faces seem to wear
 Touches of diviner air.

III

'Neath the glimpses of the moon,
 Flowers pale, and droop, and swoon,
 Truant streams steal out of glens,
 Over violet-scented fens,
 Through the tall grass of the meadow,
 Throwing back Diana's shadow.

IV

The phantom fingers of the Breeze
Play upon the slumbrous trees
Their wondrous, untaught minstrelsy!
Making every leaf a key!
Every twig a flat or sharp!
Every sycamore a harp!

V

The music voice of distant rills
Humming in the hearts of hills
Steals upon me like a stream
Of music thro' a saddened dream,
Or, as with a murmuring breath
Thoughtful memory whispereth.

VI

And, more charming than the chimes
Floating through a poet's rhymes,
From the hill-brows and the dells
Comes a tinkling tongue that tells
Of grazing herd, while from the hill
Pipes the plaintive Whip-po-will!

VII

The Evening comes as softly down
Upon my heart as on the town;
Bends above *its* tumult wild
As above her restless child
Bends the mother, singing lowly
Some refrain of melancholy.

THE GOLDEN ISLAND

I

I KNOW an island sitting in the sea,
As stately as a God!
With great blue waves forever at its feet
Cringing like worshippers!
And when the crowned sun
Urges his hot steeds thro' the gates of day,
A golden shower falls on it the while.
Queen Cleopatra never bore
A brighter jewel on her bosom's swell
Than seems this Island sitting in the sea.

II

And when the coy young Moon
Becomes enamoured of her beauty in the wave,
As did Narcissus in the minstrel's rhyme —
That sea-kist isle is flushed with silver light,
And Beauty like a spirit haunteth it.
O! it was grand of April nights to hear
That strange old Ocean talking to himself!
Though Autumn blasts have filled them since,
My ears still hold the silver strains
Of those wind-ditties that all summer haunt
That Golden Island sitting in the sea.

III

I've but to close my eyes, and I behold
Those curving wavelets in the cold moonlight,
Tumbling above each other on the shore,
Showing the stars their red phosphoric veins!

O sprite of Thought! thy dainty fingers wipe
The city's dust from out my blinded eyes.
Like Him that called dead Lazarus from the tomb,
Thou call'st "Come forth!" and lo!
The buried Past lifts up its coffin lid,
Twelve of the eighteen Summers of my life,
Like Twelve white Maidens tending on a Queen,
Stand, flower-decked, round Memory!
O, thou fine sprite! what treasures thou hast piled
In the mind's storehouse! Memory unlocks
The tomb of the departed Years, and shows
Them in their royalty stretched out like Kings!
O! sweet the pictures that she brings to me —
Dim woods with pulses of a scented wind,
And twilight shadows hanging on the trees
Like birdlings half asleep!
And forms and faces that in soul-land move;
But dearer than the first of these,
That Golden Island sitting in the sea.

IV

Æolus is a king there,
And his rough-tuned lips
Voice sea-born melodies for Neptune's ear!
And Echo's hoyden daughters sit
Upon the rocks, and mimic Ocean,
Who moans all the while, like an old man
Whose years have led him to the gate of Death.
The sea-gulls screech around it,
And the lark above
Hangs a sweet drop of music in the air!
O! 'tis a spot fit for a Deity,
Grand as the isles of the Hesperides,
That Golden Island sitting in the sea.

THE BARD

QUAINT-THOUGHTED Rumor whispered of a Name,
And said that Fame had set another star
Within the glorious galaxy that brows
Old England's forehead! and that she had paused,
And had been listening to a Titan bard
Attentively as Summer to the Wren!
It spake of one, a child of Penury,
In whose veins ran red blood as beautiful
As pulses of the purple wine; his song
As the full gushes of a ripening soul —
Rare music drops wrung out by anguish from
A heart sphered with humanity, a-flush
With inward Spring, and drunk with love of this
Dear World. One that made Fate a menial,
And with a holy purpose in his soul,
Rose from obscurity above his peers
Like a full moon that leaves a dismal swamp
And sits in heaven 'mong the stars and night!
Not long I waited for the winds to waft
This freighted soul o'er the Atlantic wave;
For soon the Western Hemisphere bursts forth
In murmurs, like a Memnon touched at morn.
And well I know that proud Columbia hailed
Another son of song, and stretched her hands
To laurel him. His Book came; and I felt
The Passion that ran through it like a vein,
Was born of Genius, and that the skill
Which flung his fevered being into song,
Would write his name upon the hearts of men
In characters Time's finger cannot blot.

I read and read until my heart was flushed
With a new pleasure; a diviner Light
Came on me, and its golden fingers touched
My being into tears, as the lightning
Breaks into a cloud and ravishes its wealth of
Rain. I read and read, and tho' my eyes grew
Dim with weariness, my soul still thirsted
For those draughts of thought inspiring as Wine!
And all one summer day I bent above
His book, like a pale lily o'er a stream,
And saw my own heart-fancies mirrored on
His page with wilder beauty. . . .
I read and read until the day and dusk
In married colors flooded through the blinds,
And darkness laid his black hand on the page.
And with the taper burning at my side,
The Midnight came upon me ere I'd done
With stars like drops of fire upon her breast!
I turned to look at them and wondered why
Such God-like beauty doomed the sinful world.
I thought of those great souls that, dying, leave
Behind the shadow of their godliness;
Who wrestled all their lives with some great Wrong,
As Jacob did with the mysterious
Angel one long still night at Penueel.
Dear God! when will Contention come and sleep
In the soft lap of Peace? And when shall Right
Throw off its galling chains, as in the spring
The brooks leap from their icy manacles
With an exuberance of joy? Dear God!
When this is so, shall not the Sun go down
Upon the world with a great flushing light,
And rise amid a chorus of the stars
In Paradise?

HOPE

AN EXCERPT FROM AN ANCIENTE RIME

WHEN from darke chaos was create ye earthe,
 When firsté ye sun glowed from its heichte,
 When Nature gave ye pond'rous mountains birthe,
 And peerless Daye succeeded Lovelie Nighte,
 When planates glowed tho' brighte in day, ye colde
 Dotted ye mantle stretched from pole to pole.

'Twas then that Hope with calm cerulean eye,
 Ne decked in statelie robes of Pride,
 Descended from her throne on highe
 And sought alike ye rich and poor man's side,
 To soothe his woe and blunt keen miserie's barbe,
 And clothe ye Future in a brighter garbe.

She woke ye slumbering Genius, bade him rise;
 From Sorrow's eye she wiped ye falling tear,
 Smiled sweetlie on Ambition's soaring eyes,
 And hovered even o'er Death's gloomy bier.
 Who ceased to smile she bade them smile agayne
 And in *anticipation*, banished present payne!

LILLYAN

O, DREAMY-EYÈD maiden!
 With Peri beauty laden,
 Lillyan! did thy Southern skies
 Blend those sea-shell dyes
 On thy soft cheeks, Lillyan?

Lillyan sits through April noons
 In the shadow of the eaves

Twining flowerets in her hair;
I would be the crumpled leaves
On the breast of Lillyan!
Dainty Lady Lillyan.
Her sweet face haunts me where I rove,
Her sunny glances bless me,
Her gentler smiles caress me,
And, O! my soul's a-flush with love
Of that sad gypsy, Lillyan.

Lillyan in a place of flowers
Slept one summer day;
Lillyan did not hear my footsteps
As I passed that way;
And, I wis,
I planted a long nectared kiss
Upon the lips of Lillyan,
The rare-ripe lips of Lillyan!

And she oped her frightened eyes
With a glance of scorn,
For the proudest little Lady
That was ever born
Is this self-same Lillyan,
This dainty darling Lillyan.

Like a shattered April rainbow
Up the skies, I saw the blood go
Through the cheeks of Lillyan;
And then kneeling at her feet,
"Did the kiss I gave thee, Sweet,
Fall on those red lips with such pain?"
She said, "Yes! take it back again." —
O! that roguish Lillyan.

IV. SCENE OF BLANCHETTE

SCENE IV. — *A road by the churchyard of Eld; the town and the Castles of Craige and Edenwold seen in the distance. BLANCHETTE and IVAN sitting near the gate.*

BLANCHETTE

Wilt thou not
Finish, Ivan, the sad tale that thou wert
Telling me last eve? I feel my path
Has been a bridge of flowers, when I think
Of thy captivity.

IVAN

Where left I off?

BLANCHETTE

'Twas where they dragged thee in a noisome cave
After the battle, faint with heavy chains,
And streaked with thine own blood.

IVAN

O, let the Past
Sleep in a shroud! Why should we ever strew
The thorns of olden sorrows on our way —
The memory of wilted hopes — when joys
Of present blossoming, like roses, wait
For plucking?

BLANCHETTE

It is these sombre phases
Of our lives that make the bright seem brighter.
In the soft blending of the light and shade

All of the limner's cunning lies. We find
No joy till we have had a twilight on
The heart. We cannot see the sun, 'less
It is partly dimmed with clouds, for it would
Dazzle us. And if bliss should, like rivers,
Ever through our beings leap, we should grow
Surfeited and sick, like pet canaries
Fed on luscious sweets. Is it not so?

IVAN

O, thou canst see God's hand in sunshine and
In shade! To thee, whose spirit wears on earth
A pure touch of heaven's divinity,
Those things are plain, that unto coarser souls
Seem swathed in darkness. O my better heart!
My soul-philosopher! teach me thy faith,
Thy subtle faith, that sees in every woe
An Angel masking or a Joy disguised!

BLANCHETTE

Wilt thou not tell the tale? 'Tis such a one
As should be told at sunset, when the clouds
Turn their flushed faces on departing day,
And then grow sad and sadder by degrees,
As the great orb hides underneath the earth!
Tell me it quickly! or the dusk will set
Its signet on the zenith, and the night
Will cap it with a moon.

IVAN

'Twas a great cave
Where sunbeams never were, and night and day
Were one; full of dark precipices,
Yawning and moaning ever, and deep streams

Writhing and squirming, like black serpents, 'mong
Stalagmites centuries old. Echo roamed
Through all the caverns like a demon king,
With lips brimful of startling cadences.
In the unearthly light of burning brands,
Forms, more horrible than that of Comus
And his crew, dug in the rocky-veinèd ribs
And in the bowels of their prison house,
Bringing forth precious jewels. Men were there
Who never saw the sun, nor felt the breath
Of evening on their cheeks. Born in that realm
Of Cerberus, at tales of planates poised
In viewless air; earth's ragged cloak of snow;
The Sister Months, and crystal tides, and ships,
They'd ope their eyes with wonderment; and birds
With hearts of melody were myths to them.
Here did I dwell the long and lonely years;
The hours went by as slow and sombrely
As funeral trains — each bore a dead hope
With it. Even now, in this rich moment
Of serenest bliss, the thoughts of that drear
Cave, fall on my heart like clouds, darkening it.
I'll not let these cold and clammy mem'ries
Finger the guilt from off this golden hour!
No more! no more! I'm all too weary, love,
Of this dark episode in my heart's Life!

BLANCHETTE

What! leave it all unfinished like a strain
Of music broken by the wind? Oh, no!
Tell what kind angel took thee by the hand
And through those palaces, stalactite hung,
Led thee to rosy daylight and to me.

IVAN

An angel! Ah, thou sayest rightly, for
It was. If ever God sent angel to
This earth, Madene was one. A miner's child,
Born in the rocky navel of that cave,
She grew up with strange thoughts, wild joys, and
tears
Ran thro' her being like rare music thro'
A dream. Her soul lay in her hazel eyes
Like a white lily in a brook. There was
An atmosphere of purity around
Her, and of love, a tenderness, a grace
That loving nature robed her with, not art.
She was a star in that dark spot, a light
Gilding the darkness.

BLANCHETTE

And you loved her?

IVAN

Very much. She nursed me in my sickness
With the gentlest care, and sang low songs
And soothed me like a child. 'Tis not 'mid thrones
And palaces we find the noblest hearts.
Costlier diamonds are hid in the earth
Than ever yet have decked a coronal.
In the lone paths and byways of this world,
Souls, rich in their own wealth, spring up and die
Like flowerets unnoticed. She was one
That shall make heaven beautiful, and earth
Is lovelier while she lives. Through weary,
Weary nights and days o' pain she tended me.
When strength returned, my grateful lips were filled

With language; but how beggared 'twas to clothe
The promptings of my soul. I spoke to her
Of "home"—"dear home" framed like a picture in
My thought; of one that waited for me, with
Heart-trembles and most anxious eyes; and she
Would drink my words in with a thirsty ear.
When thro' the toil of day, I'd sit me down
Upon the margent of some inky stream,
Hearing its echo through the dull deaf caves,
She'd find me ever, and sit at my feet.
Once, as I told her of thee, Blanch, starting
From out a seeming revery, she cried,
"Tell me no more of this dark-tressèd one!
I love thee, stranger of the outer world!
Have loved since first our glances met; my mouth
Has burned upon thy forehead in thy sleep;
Mine eyes have fed on thee while wrapped in dreams!"
"O, say not so," I whispered, "say not so!
Thou art much dearer to me than my life;
'Twere thine could it but serve thee;— but my love—
I beg thee do not ask it." Her hand fell
Coldly on my own. "'Twas a wild, wild dream,"
She said, "but over now. We will no more
Of it. From this time forward I have one
Great aim in life — thy liberty; for she
Thou lovest must be worthy thee." I could
Have worshipped her, so full of holiness
She seemed, so full of paradise. Blanchette,
I do believe this world is linked to that
Next better world by souls like hers.

BLANCHETTE

And I.

She must have fallen through the fingers of

The angels (never meant for earth), into
That cave; and they, mayhap, have ever since
Been searching for her. I am listening.

IVAN

'Twas two years after this she came one night
And drew me from a labyrinth of dreams.
"Come," she spoke wildly, "I have seen a light,
Not like the torches that we use, but soft
And clear and lovely as an eye." We went.
It was a star she saw glimmering through
A rupture in the rock, half hidden by
A fallen tree, and creeping vines, and leaves
Of many summer times. My heart was full.
I felt Æolus' lips upon my brow,
And I could hear, among the trees without,
The wind's wild symphonies. I turned to bless
Her — she was gone. Men hurried to and fro
In the rotunda of the cave with lights.
My absence was discovered; at a bound
I gained the opening, and thrust back the leaves,
And stood out in the night — glorious night!
Peopled with planate worlds! The river crossed,
I hid me in the woods, and cooled my lips
With mangoes, sweetest fruit Pomona hangs
Upon the trees. I slept in shady glens
By day, and travelled under covert of
The night. The war had broken out afresh.
I joined my comrades on a battle eve;
Once more I led them in victorious
Charge. The fame, the wealth, the rank
I won, I lay them at thy feet! . . .
(An hour later, sunset; a mist seen on the mountains.)

BLANCHETTE

The birds are mute, and all the winding streams,
With pebbly eyes, flow on subdued. The woods
Are spotted o'er with carmine, ribbed with gold,
And the great sun goes rippling down the West!

IVAN

And Twilight, like some dark Egyptian Queen,
Stalks down the mountain side!

BLANCHETTE

 Soon Night will come,
Cloud-capped and starry-eyed, with Saturn, Mars,
And Venus in her train!

IVAN

 How like a dream
It is! The town below us slumbering
In the dusk, and the faint throbbing of its
Many hearts; the mournful curfew stealing
On the night, and the sweet bulbul singing
To the rose; and thou, my love, thou seemest
The most unreal of all.

BLANCHETTE

 There is a sad,
Dim beauty in the scene that touches me.
Morn walking o'er the coral-grottoed deep,
Is not so 'witching as the dreamy haze
That cloaks this landscape; and I would not match
One scintillation of mild Hesperus
'Gainst all his amber beams. The village lamps
Are lighted; darkness screens the chimney-tops,
The carven gables; nought is visible

Save twinkling lamps, except when some gude-wife
The window curtain lifts, and watches for
Her husband; then a gleam of light runs out,
Spanning the darkness like a fairy bridge!

IVAN

And Castle Craige looms 'mid the shadows up,
With window eyes of fire; but Edenwold
Is bleak and gloomy as a blasted tree.
Come, love, let's leave these quiet, quiet graves;
A churchyard is a dismal place at night,
And we should not be sad. Ere Evening sweeps
In purple robes again across the sky,
The sweet-lipped bell that silent, drowsy hangs
In yon old belfry of the ivied church,
Shall tune its tongue and chime our marriage morn.
To-morrow, love! to-morrow!

NIGHT SCENE

ONE cloud was gabled like a country house
With latticed windows, vine-hid, through which
looked
The melting eyes of stars. From out one side
Was hung the moon like a great lantern in
The crowded porch of some quaint village inn!
. . . The far dim woods
Were tipped with amethyst; beneath me stretched
The town of Eld bespangled with its lights;
Above me, drooped the linings of the clouds!
And I could hear, like one in trance, the feet
Of cascades tripping musically down
Emerald hills, while ever and anon
The Nightingale sent trembles thro' the night.

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE NEVER
DID RUN SMOOTH

(1858)

TO

RICHARD HENRY STODDARD,

Under whose fingers

This Story would have blossomed into true Arabian Roses,

MY SEVEN NIGHTS' RHYMING

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



PREFACE

*In sooth it was a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Al Raschid.*

—TENNYSON.

THE munificence, wit, and affability of the Barmecides made them the delight at once of Princes and Slaves; and Giaffer stood so high in the esteem of Haroun Al Raschid that the Caliph, in order to enjoy his company in the presence of his Royal Sister, the Princess Abbassa, decreed a marriage between them, but with the capricious restriction that they should forbear the privileges of such a union. The lovers, thinking to overcome the Caliph's whim after marriage, conceded to the condition; but they reckoned without their host, as lovers are apt to do. The Caliph proved as ice to all their entreaties. Nature, at length, broke through this despotic prohibition, and — the finale is told in the Poem.

The details which the author has given concerning the Nuptials of Giaffer and Abbassa are not to be found on the pages of legitimate history; but that the reader may not think these facts lacking in authenticity, the author would refer him to the *Tellmenow Isitsöornot*, a work somewhat rare in this country, but occasionally to be met with at Old Book Stalls. To this same Arabic Wonder-Book is Mr. Poe greatly indebted for his *Thousand and Second Tale*.

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH

I. THE CALIPH MUSES

At Bagdad, in his gold kiosk,
Haroun Al Raschid sate one day:
A-through the carven trellis-work
The sunshine drifted in, and lay
In argent diamonds on his face;
And gleamed across the golden lace
That ran like lightning round his robes;
And seemed to split two crystal globes
Of goldfish, on two jasmine desks;
And fired the costly arabesques;
And, falling on the fountain, turned
Its spray to gems that glowed and burned —
A spikèd knot of chrysolite
That made a splendor in the place!
But most it loved the Caliph's face:
And it was at the noon of day.
On cushions cygnet-soft he lay,
Unconscious of the garish light;
Untasted stood his fruit and ice;
Unheeded were the winds that drew
The lemon trees all ways, and blew
The gentlest gales from Paradise!
Without, among the myrtle flowers,
Two fawns lay sleeping; a gazelle
Played with its gilded chain, and rung,
At every step, a silver bell:

Two lovers, down the garden-walks,
Went hand in hand, like May and June;
And one was as the rising sun,
And one was as the waning moon!
The fawns may sleep; the white gazelle
May spill the lily's cup of dew;
But, lovers, love did ne'er run smooth:
The wily Caliph dreams of you!

The sunlight slid from Aaron's brow;
Then from his beard of silken wire;
Then touched his feet, then touched the mats,
And set their silver fringe on fire:
And still he heeded not the flow
Of time, that evening long ago.
But when the shadow of the mosque,
Near by, was shattered on the floor,
The Caliph turned and ate his ice,
And drank the drink forgot before;
And smiled like one who, having brought
To ripeness some imperfect thought,
Is vain of his own wisdom. Then
This pearl of kings, this flower of men,
Caressed his beard, and softly spake
Like one who murmurs, half awake:—
*To have our Vizier ever near,
By Allah's goodness it is clear
The faithful Barmecide must wed
Our royal sister; but I swear
For them shall be no bridal bed!—*
May countless Marids torture thee,
And fill thy slumber with despair,
O Caliph! for thy cruelty!

II. HOW IT STRUCK THE LOVERS

THEN through the Palace, north and south,
The edict went from mouth to mouth,

THE PRINCESS AND THE VIZIER WED!

For it was law and gospel then

Whate'er Haroun Al Raschid said.

And nothing loth the Vizier was.

He mused: — *It is the Caliph's whim;*

When we are wed, the Clement God

Will gracious wisdom send to him.

And she: — *We wed, yet do not wed;*

The Just would keep me pure and white. . . .

I will be ice. And yet, for all,

She dreamt about her bridal night!

So, after bath, the slave-girls brought

The precious raiment for her wear,

The misty izar from Mosul,

The pearls and opals for her hair,

The slippers for her little feet,

(Two radiant crescent moons they were,)

And lavender, and spikenard sweet,

And attars, nedd, and heavy musk.

When they had finished dressing her,

(The Eye of Morn, the Heart's Desire!)

Like one pale star against the dusk,

A single diamond on her brow

Trembled with its imprisoned fire!

III. THE WEDDING FÊTE

A THOUSAND lanterns, tulip-shaped,

Of amber made, and colored glass,

Were hung like fruit among the trees;
And on the garden-walks and grass
Their red and purple shadows lay,
As if the slave-boys, here and there,
Had spilt a jar of brilliant wine!
The stagnant moonlight filled the air;
The roses spread their crimson tents;
And all the night was sick with scents
Of marjoram and eglantine.
Gay barges, rowed with silver oars,
Ploughéd through the Tigris in the light
Which from the Palace windows gleamed —
A fall of gold, quick shafts of flame
That burnt the edges of the night!
And from the open portals came
Such music that the heavens hung mute:
A houri playing on a lute!
Sweet waterfalls in unseen dells!
The trilling of some marvellous bird!
And ever and anon were heard
The dancers' silvery ankle-bells.

Within a spacious marble hall,
The Caliph's Chamber of Nine Domes,
(Six hemispheres of jasper, propt
By agate columns carved like Gnomes,
And three, like lilies newly blown,
Of silver,) on a glittering throne,
A gorgeous god, a jewelled Fate,
The great Haroun Al Raschid sate,
And round about on either hand,
The royal guests from Samarcand,
The lords and emirs of the land!

Before him, on a cloth of gold
Sown thick with stars and crescents, stood
The lovers. On Abbassa's cheek,
Like roses, blushed the modest blood;
Her form was like the papyrus reed,
And graceful as the palm-tree's fan;
Her eyes were gems; her eyebrows' arch,
The thin new moon of Ramadan!
And half a head above the throng,
O'erlooking Sultan, King, and Shah,
The Vizier breathed the golden air
About him, like a splendid star.

IV. HOW THE LITTLE MAIDEN WEPT

THE music sang itself to death;
The lamps died out in their perfume:
Abbassa, on a silk divan,
Sate in the moonlight in her room.
Her handmaids loosed her scented hair
With lily fingers; from her brow
Released the diamond, and unlaced
The robe that held her bosom's snow;
Removed the slippers from her feet,
And led her to an ivory bed. . . .
Go place this alabaster lamp
Beside the window there, she said;
So if he wake at dead of night,
He'll say, — "It is Abbassa's light!"
Then she laid down upon the bed
With folded hands, a happy maid!
And Slumber kissed her on the eyes,
And led her to the Land of Shade.

Her sleep was gentle as a child's,
 An hour or more: and then she sighed;
 Then stretched her arms out in the dark:
 And then awoke. *My lord!* she cried;
 Then waited, with her cheeks aflame,
 For answer. But no answer came.
I did but dream! And then she wept.
Alas! she sighed, *I do not weep*
Because, awake, I have not found
The one I thought of in my sleep;
And yet, and yet — O, heart of mine,
I cannot tell thee WHY I weep!

V. HOW GIAFFER PASSED THE NIGHT

HE could not sleep, for lo! he saw
 A pair of eyes that banished rest,
 A star-sweet face, with clouds of hair,
 That fain would lie upon his breast.
 And straight he thought how fair she was —
 How some kind fairy, at her birth,
 Had left a glory on her brow,
 And taught her all the charms on earth!
Her hair, he said, is silken night;
Her eyes in tender mist are drowned;
Her mouth — a little ruby place,
Where pearls for Sultans may be found!
 And with this sort of Eastern talk,
 He made the moments seem less long;
 But, wearying of forced delight,
 He brooded on his cruel wrong,
 And bit the blood into his lips,
 And tore the turban from his head: —

By Allah! that must be the lamp
In Beauty's chamber! Giaffer said.
And lo! it was Abbassa's room,
Abbassa's room just opposite!
And in the window was a light,
That stretched across the garden's gloom,
And seemed a bridge of fire, whereon
The Vizier might have stolen to her:
And there he stood, and did not stir
Until the rising of the sun.

VI. HEARTS AND CROWNS

THREE nights did Giaffer watch this light,
Till morning blossomed in the sky:
Three nights Abbassa had her dream,
And wept; and, weeping, wondered why!
And, on the fourth, as sick Haroun
Walked through the garden, breathing spice,
The Vizier broke upon his thought,
And knelt before the Caliph thrice: —
Three nights, O Caliph! have I lain
In yonder chamber all alone —
And thrice the Caliph passed him by.
O Heart of Ice! O Ear of Stone!
Thou giv'st thy slave a cup of gall
To drink from — as if thou wert Fate!
The Caliph, angered, turned and cried,
Now may Hath Ridwan shut the gate
Of Heaven upon me when I die,
But I will slay thee with this hand
If thou forgetest what is writ —
Let slaves obey when kings command!

With this he drew his farajah
 Around him, and with haughty frown
 Paced through the garden as before.
One wears a turban, one a crown,
 So Giaffer mused, *then be it said*
The difference 'twixt the slave and king
Is this — the Crown upon the head!
Man's heart need not be finely wrought,
If so he wear a jewelled ring
Upon his brows! Go to, Haroun!
Thou art the slave and I the king.
The pitying heart endures for aye —
The crown must lie this side the grave:
Then greater than a heartless king,
O Allah! is thy crownless slave!
 So saying, Giaffer smoothed his brow,
 And with his thought on some device
 For love's sake, sauntered up and down
 The moonlit garden, breathing spice.

VII. THE AFRITES GIVE GIAFFER A HINT

Now when the Palace lights were out,
 And there was neither sound nor sight
 Of life within the lofty halls,
 And Bagdad's minarets and mosques,
 And garden-places and kiosks,
 Were turned to marble by the white
 Round moon — it chanced that Giaffer stood
 Pensive within a little wood
 Of mulberry and citron trees,
 Where a low fountain made for him
 A fairy music, and each breeze
 Came heavily laden with the dim

Sweet opiate from the lotus flowers.
This spot was haunted by the powers
Of Rest, and whosoever came
 In the still midnight there to weep
On the world's usage, or in shame,
 The airy spirits put to sleep!

No sooner strayed the Vizier here,
 Than viewless Afrites, of no size,
Floated around his face, and threw
 The dust of slumber in his eyes!
And while he slept upon the grass,
 Within the fountain's speary rain,
A dream of an unknown delight
 Burst like a blossom in his brain!
He thought Abbassa and himself
 Were sitting at a gorgeous feast,
The like of which was never spread
 For any Caliph in the East,
Or any King, alive or dead!
Such amber pears, and grapes of jet,
Such sweetly-smelling mignonette,
Such salvers, piled with richest food,
 Such slender urns of precious wine,
Such — ah! when fancy makes a feast,
 It costs no more to have it fine!
And so, (he dreamt,) until the peep
 Of dawn they feasted, laughed, and sung;
 Then music, with its honeyed tongue,
Breathed sweetest secrets to their sleep!

Thus ran the dream. When Giaffer woke
 'Twas dawn indeed: the dewy air

Was rife with fresh mimosa blooms.
 He heard the call to morning prayer:
 Then he arose, and bathed his face,
 And smiled; and by this smile he meant:
To-night we'll have a feast like that,
God help us, in the Caliph's tent —
The silk pavilion that he raised
For our especial use, I think.
He'll sleep! — a little piece of bhang
Would flavor well his evening drink!

VIII. IN THE PAVILION

MESROUR, *go bring my golden cup,*
That I may drink my evening drink!
 And even as Al Raschid said,
 The cup was brought, a golden-pink
 Great goblet rough with emeralds.
 He sipped and sipped, and slumber crept
 Upon him. *Stop the music, slave!*
The king would sleep. And lo! he slept.

Now, near the northern palace-gate,
 A place as still as still could be,
 Haroun, like Kubla Khan, did once
 "A stately pleasure-dome decree" —
 A grand pavilion, under which
 It was his royal wont to sit
 And smoke the ripe Latakian leaves,
 And laugh at Giaffer's pleasant wit;
 And here his Georgians danced for him,
 (He loved a dainty foot and hand;)
 And here he drank his iced sherbét,
 Until his Highness could not stand.

And here the Vizier spread a feast,
 And here the happy lovers sate —
 O Caliph! you may watch and watch,
 Love laughs at locksmiths soon or late!

And there they were, the truant twain,
 Despite the Caliph's cruel ban:
 They looked into each other's eyes,
 And sipped the wines of Astrakhan;
 They smiled at time, and laughed at fate,
 And scorned the Caliph as they ate
 The juicy fig, the spicy lime,
 The nectarines from Oman brought,
 The rosy peaches that had caught
 The taste and tint of summer time;
 And slyly from their finger-tips
 Threw kisses to each other's lips.

The scented fountain spread in air
 A tangled net of crystal thread;
 And round about the silken tent
 The lanterns glimmered, white and red;
 And fairy fingers passed the fruit,
 And fairy fingers touched the lute,
 And silver laughter cut the air —
 O, merrily the time went by! . . .
 Now, while the lamps burnt bright within,
 The moon stole down behind the sky!

I

*O, cease, sweet music! let us rest:
 Dawn comes, sang Giaffer, hateful dawn!
 Henceforth let day be counted night,
 And midnight called the morn!*

3
 3 3 3
 3 3 3
 3 3 3

II

*O, cease, sweet music! let us rest:
 A tearful, languid spirit lies
 (Like the dim scent in violets,)
 In Beauty's gentle eyes.*

III

*There is a sadness in sweet sound
 That quickens tears! O, music, lest
 We weep with thy strange sorrow, cease!
 Be still, and let us rest.*

Lo! while he sang, the broidered screen
 Which hid the door was thrust aside,
 And in Haroun Al Raschid strode
 Before the bridegroom and the bride!
Ho! dog of Viziers, what is this?
Ye drug my wine to give me rest! . . .
So sleep thou! And with this he struck
 The Vizier thrice upon the breast;
 And where he struck, the crimson blood
 Gushed out, and O, it flowed apace.
 Then Giaffer turned as pale 's the moon.
 Then forward fell upon his face,
 And kissed Abbassa's feet, and died!
 And great Haroun Al Raschid cried —
So die they whom the Caliph hates!
 Then three black Mamlouks, three grim fates,
 Took poor Abbassa by the hair,
 And thrust her from the Palace gates!

THE BALLAD OF BABIE BELL, AND
OTHER POEMS
(1858)



TO
V. E. V.
OF
NEW ENGLAND.

BABIE BELL

THE POEM OF A LITTLE LIFE THAT WAS BUT THREE
APRILS LONG

I

HAVE you not heard the poets tell
How came the dainty Babie Bell
 Into this world of ours?
 The gates of Heaven were left ajar:
 With folded hands and dreamy eyes,
 Wandering out of Paradise,
She saw this planet, like a star,
 Hung in the purple depths of even —
Its bridges, running to and fro,
O'er which the white-winged Angels go,
 Bearing the holy Dead to Heaven!
She touched a bridge of flowers — those feet,
So light they did not bend the bells
Of the celestial asphodels!
They fell like dew upon the flowers,
And all the air grew strangely sweet!
And thus came dainty Babie Bell
 Into this world of ours.

II

She came and brought delicious May.
 The swallows built beneath the eaves;
 Like sunlight in and out the leaves,
The robins went, the livelong day;

The lily swung its noiseless bell,
And o'er the porch the trembling vine
Seemed bursting with its veins of wine!
How sweetly, softly, twilight fell!
O, earth was full of singing birds,
And happy springtide flowers,
When the dainty Babie Bell
Came to this world of ours!

III

O Babie, dainty Babie Bell,
How fair she grew from day to day!
What woman nature filled her eyes,
What poetry within them lay!
Those deep and tender twilight eyes,
So full of meaning, pure and bright
As if she yet stood in the light
Of those oped gates of Paradise!
And we loved Babie more and more:
Ah, never in our hearts before
Was love so lovely born:
We felt we had a link between
This real world and that unseen —
The land beyond the morn!
And for the love of those dear eyes,
For love of her whom God led forth,
(The mother's being ceased on earth
When Babie came from Paradise) —
For love of Him who smote our lives,
And woke the chords of joy and pain,
We said, *Sweet Christ!* — our hearts bent down
Like violets after rain.

IV

And now the orchards, which in June
Were white and rosy in their bloom —
Filling the crystal veins of air
With gentle pulses of perfume —
Were rich in Autumn's mellow prime:
The plums were globes of honeyed wine,
The hived sweets of summer time!
The ivory chestnut burst its shell:
The soft-cheeked peaches blushed and fell!
The grapes were purpling in the grange,
And time brought just as rich a change
In little Babie Bell.

Her tiny form more perfect grew,
And in her features we could trace,
In softened curves, her mother's face!
Her angel-nature ripened too.
We thought her lovely when she came,
But she was holy, saintly now . . .
Around her pale angelic brow
We saw a slender ring of flame!

V

God's hand had taken away the seal
Which held the portals of her speech;
And oft she said a few strange words
Whose meaning lay beyond our reach.
She never was a child to us,
We never held her being's key:
We could not teach her holy things:
She was Christ's self in purity!

VI

It came upon us by degrees:
We saw its shadow ere it fell,
The knowledge that our God had sent
His messenger for Babie Bell.
We shuddered with unlanguage pain,
And all our hopes were changed to fears,
And all our thoughts ran into tears
Like sunshine into rain.
We cried aloud in our belief,
 "O, smite us gently, gently, God!
 Teach us to bend and kiss the rod,
 And perfect grow through grief."
Ah, how we loved her, God can tell;
Her little heart was cased in ours:
 Our hearts are broken, Babie Bell!

VII

At last he came, the messenger,
 The messenger from unseen lands:
And what did dainty Babie Bell?
She only crossed her little hands,
She only looked more meek and fair!
We parted back her silken hair;
We laid some buds upon her brow,
White buds, the summer's drifted snow —
Death's bride arrayed in flowers!
And thus went dainty Babie Bell
 Out of this world of ours!

SWALLOW-FLIGHTS

CLOTH OF GOLD

YOU ask us if by rule or no
Our many-colored songs are wrought?
Upon the cunning loom of thought,
We weave our fancies, so and so.

The busy shuttle comes and goes
Across the rhymes, and deftly weaves
A tissue out of autumn leaves,
With here a thistle, there a rose.

With art and patience thus is made
The poet's perfect Cloth of Gold:
When woven so, nor moth nor mould
Nor time, can make its colors fade.

THE FADED VIOLET

WHAT thought is folded in thy leaves!
What tender thought, what speechless pain!
I hold thy faded lips to mine,
Thou darling of the April rain!

I hold thy faded lips to mine,
Though scent and azure tint are fled —
O dry, mute lips! ye are the type
Of something in me cold and dead:

Of something wilted like thy leaves;
Of fragrance flown, of beauty dim;
Yet, for the love of those white hands
That found thee by a river's brim —

That found thee when thy sunny mouth
Was purpled as with drinking wine —
For love of her who love forgot,
I hold thy faded lips to mine!

That thou shouldst live when I am dead,
When hate is dead, for me, and wrong,
For this, I use my subtlest art,
For this, I fold thee in my song.

MY NORTH AND SOUTH

I AM very, very fond
Of a blonde,
Mistress Maud, and so come here;
And yet, and yet, and yet
I like a gay brunette,
Therese, dear!

O what can a body do
With you two? —
Golden hair and rosy mouth!
Black hair and eyes of jet!
You blonde, and you brunette!
You North and South!

Now, I love you, eyes and curls,
Little girls!

Give me each a dainty hand:
New England's hand shall lie
On my heart, and yours near by —
You understand?

THE GHOST'S LADY

I

UNDER the night,
In the white moonshine,
Look thou for me
By the graveyard tree,
Lady of mine,
*While the nightingales are in tune,
And the quaint little snakes in the grass
Lift their silver heads to the moon.*

2

Blushing with love,
In the white moonshine,
Lie in my arms,
So, safe from alarms,
Lady of mine,
*While the nightingales are in tune,
And the quaint little snakes in the grass
Lift their silver heads to the moon.*

3

Paler art thou
Than the white moonshine:
Ho! thou art lost —
Thou lovest a Ghost,
Lady of mine!

*While the nightingales are in tune,
And the quaint little snakes in the grass
Lift their silver heads to the moon.*

WE KNEW IT WOULD RAIN

WE knew it would rain, for all the morn,
A spirit on slender ropes of mist
Was lowering its golden buckets down
Into the vapory amethyst

Of marshes and swamps and dismal fens —
Scooping the dew that lay in the flowers,
Dipping the jewels out of the sea,
To sprinkle them over the land in showers!

We knew it would rain, for the poplars showed
The white of their leaves, the amber grain
Shrunk in the wind — and the lightning now
Is tangled in tremulous skeins of rain!

AFTER THE RAIN

THE rain has ceased, and in my room
The sunshine pours an orange flood;
And on the church's dizzy vane
The ancient Cross is bathed in blood.

From out the dripping ivy-leaves,
Antiquely-carven, gray and high,
A dormer, facing westward, looks
Upon the village like an eye:

And now it glimmers in the sun,
A globe of gold, a disk, a speck:
And in the belfry sits a Dove
With purple ripples on her neck.

A BALLAD

I

THE blackbird sings in the hazel dell,
And the squirrel sits on the tree;
And Maud she walks in the merry greenwood,
Down by the summer sea.

2

The blackbird lies when he sings of love;
And the squirrel, a rogue is he;
And Maud is an arrant flirt I trow,
And light as light can be!

3

O, blackbird, die in the hazel dell!
And, squirrel, starve on the tree!
And, Maud — you may walk in the merry green-
wood,
You are nothing more to me!

LAST NIGHT AND TO-NIGHT

LAST night my soul was lapped
In shallow merriment:
The sweet bee, Music, buzzed about my ears!
Swan-throated women, under chandeliers,
Like odors came and went!

To-night I hate them all:
It better suits my mind
To walk where ocean sobs on pitiless crags,
Bethinking me of foul sea-hags
In noisome caves confined.

TIGER-LILIES

I LIKE not lady-slippers,
Nor yet the sweet-pea blossoms,
Nor yet the flaky roses,
Red, or white as snow;
I like the chaliced lilies,
The heavy Eastern lilies,
The gorgeous tiger-lilies,
That in our garden grow!

For they are tall and slender;
Their mouths are dashed with carmine;
And when the wind sweeps by them,
On their emerald stalks
They bend so proud and graceful —
They are Circassian women,
The darlings of the harem
Adown our garden-walks!

And when the rain is falling,
I sit beside the window
And watch them glow and glisten,
How they burn and glow!
O for the burning lilies,
The tender Eastern lilies,
The gorgeous tiger-lilies,
That in our garden grow!

THE BETROTHAL

I HAVE placed a golden
Ring upon the hand
Of the sweetest little
Lady in the land!

When the early roses
Scent the sunny air,
I shall gather white ones
To tremble in her hair!

Hasten, happy roses,
Come to me by May —
In your folded petals
Lies my wedding day!

MADAM, AS YOU PASS US BY

MADAM, as you pass us by,
Dreaming of your loves and wine,
Do not brush your rich brocade
Against this little maid of mine,
Madam, as you pass us by.

When in youth my blood was warm,
Wine was royal, life complete;
So I drained the flasks of wine,
So I sat at woman's feet,
When in youth my blood was warm.

Time has taught me pleasant truths:
Lilies grow where thistles grew:

Ah, you loved me not. This maid
Loves me. There's an end of you!
Time has taught me pleasant truths.

I will speak no bitter words:
Too much passion made me blind;
You were subtle. Let it go!
For the sake of womankind
I will speak no bitter words.

But, Madam, as you pass us by,
Dreaming of your loves and wine,
Do not brush your rich brocade
Against this little maid of mine,
Madam, as you pass us by.

THE MERRY BELLS SHALL RING

I

THE merry bells shall ring,
Marguerite;
The little birds shall sing,
Marguerite —
You smile, but you shall wear
Orange blossoms in your hair,
Marguerite!

2

Ah me! the bells have rung
Marguerite;
The little birds have sung,
Marguerite —
But cypress leaf and rue
Make a sorry wreath for you,
Marguerite!

MAY

BY A POET IN CLOVER

HEBE'S here, May is here!
The air is fresh and sunny;
And the fairy bees are busy
Making golden honey!

See the knots of buttercups,
And the double pansies —
Thick as these, within my brain,
Grow the quaintest fancies!

Let me write my songs to-day,
Rhymes with dulcet closes —
Tiny epics one might hide
In the hearts of roses!

What's the use of halcyon May,
Of air so fresh and sunny,
If such a busy bee as I
Can't make golden honey?

LITTLE MAUD

O WHERE is our dainty, our darling,
The daintiest darling of all?
O where is the voice on the stairway,
O where is the voice in the hall?
The little short steps in the entry,
The silvery laugh in the hall?
O where is our dainty, our darling,
The daintiest darling of all,
Little Maud?

The peaches are ripe in the orchard,
 The apricots ready to fall;
 And the grapes are dripping their honey
 All over the garden-wall —
 But where are the lips, full and melting,
 That looked up so pouting and red,
 When we dangled the sun-purpled bunches
 Of Isabells over her head?
 O rosebud of women! where are you?
 (She never replies to our call!)
 O where is our dainty, our darling,
 The daintiest darling of all,
Little Maud?

PERDITA

I

POET, shape a song for me
 Of troubled love, of jealousy,
 Of sick conceit;
 But make its rhymes as sad and sweet
 As parting kisses be!

2

Sing me merry, when I'm gay;
 But touch a mournful string to-day;
 The birds have flown,
 Save one, the Wind, that maketh moan —
 Perdita's gone away!

NAMELESS PAIN

IN my nostrils the summer wind
 Blows the exquisite scent of the rose!

O for the golden, golden wind,
Breaking the buds as it goes,
 Breaking the buds,
 And bending the grass,
And spilling the scent of the rose!

O wind of the summer morn,
Tearing the petals in twain,
Wafting the fragrant soul
 Of the rose through valley and plain,
I would you could tear my heart to-day,
And scatter its nameless pain.

THE MOORLAND

THE moorland lies a dreary waste;
The night is dark with drizzling rain;
In yonder yawning cave of cloud
The snaky lightning writhes with pain!
 And the Wind is wailing bitterly.

O sobbing rain, outside my door!
O wailing phantoms, make your moan!
Go through the night in blind despair —
Your shadowy lips have touched my own!
 And the Wind is wailing bitterly.

No more the robin breaks its heart
Of music in the pathless woods!
The ravens croak for such as I,
The plovers screech above their broods.
 And the Wind is wailing bitterly.

All mournful things are friends of mine,
(That weary sound of falling leaves!)

Ah, there is not a kindred soul
For me on earth, but moans and grieves!
And the Wind is wailing bitterly.

I cannot sleep this lonesome night;
The ghostly rain goes by in haste,
And, further than the eye can reach,
The moorland lies a dreary waste!
And the Wind is wailing bitterly.

AT THE DEAD-HOUSE

"Drown'd! drown'd!" — HAMLET.

HERE is where they bring the dead
When they rise from the river's bed,
Sinful women who have thrown
Away the life they would not own —
Life despised and trampled down!

Sad enough. Now, you who write
Plays that give the world delight,
Tell me if in this there be
Naught for your new tragedy?
Ha! you start, you turn from me
A face brimful of misery!
Do you know that woman there,
That icy image of Despair?
Have you heard her softly speak?
Have you kissed her, lips and ch  ek?
Faith! you do not kiss her now!
Poor young mouth, and pale young brow,
Drench  d hair, and glassy eye —
Go, put that in your tragedy!

SONG

1

MAIDEN Maud and Marian
Have not passed me by —
Archèd foot and red-ripe mouth,
And bronze-brown eye!

2

When my hair is gray,
Then I shall be wise;
Then I shall not care
For bronze-brown eyes.

3

Then let maiden Maud
And Marian pass me by;
So they do not scorn me now
What care I?

PALABRAS CARINOSAS

GOOD night! I have to say good night
To such a host of peerless things!
Good night unto that snowy hand
All queenly with its weight of rings!
Good night to fond, delicious eyes,
Good night to chestnut braids of hair,
Good night unto the perfect mouth,
And all the sweetness nestled there —
The snowy hand detains me, then
I'll have to say Good night again!

But there will come a time, my love,
When, if I read our stars aright,
I shall not linger by this porch
With my adieus. Till then, good night!
You wish the time were now? And I.
You do not blush to wish it so?
You would have blushed yourself to death
To own so much a year ago —
What, both these snowy hands! ah, then,
I'll have to say Good night again!

I SAT BESIDE YOU WHILE YOU SLEPT

I SAT beside you while you slept,
And Christ! but it was woe
To see the long dark lashes rest
Upon your cheeks of snow,
To see you lie so happily,
And to think you did not know
What a weary, weary world is this,
While you were sleeping so!

You are dearer than my soul, love,
But in that hour of pain,
I wished that you might never lift
Those eyes to mine again,
Might never weep, but lie in sleep
While the long seasons roll —
I wished this, I who love you, love,
Better than my soul!
And then — I cannot tell what then,
But that I might not weep
I caught you in my arms, love,
And kissed you from your sleep.

DEAD

I HEARD a sorrowful woman say,
"Come in and look at our child!"

I saw an Angel at shut of day,
And it never spoke — but smiled!
I think of it in the city's streets,
I dream of it when I rest —
The violet eyes, the waxen hands,
And the one white rose on the breast!

IN THE WOODS

THE summer birds are in the summer sky:
I hear the music of the woods again,
The wild wind-symphonies that moan and die
On hemlock harps with such a sad refrain.

I long for him who knew so well these tones;
He loved this greening world of scented vines,
This slumberous air that stirs the chestnut cones,
And wafts an odor from the gummy pines.

Here do the slim imperial tulips blow,
And those ground-flowers that seem like clots of blood
On the green grass: and here do lilies grow —
The pale-faced Dryads of the summer wood!

All pleasant noises, all delicious smells,
All things whereof our poets' songs are born —
Alas! that painful Autumn through these dells
Should moaning come, and make the place forlorn.

Autumn will come; the fretful winds will blow;
The rain will weep for Summer in the grave;

Then Winter — building palaces of snow
With crystal vestibule and architrave.

Shadow of sorrow, brood upon the place!
Here did I part with one who nevermore
Shall hunt for Spring's first violet, nor chase
The hungry fox when woods and fields are hoar.

AUTUMNALIA

WHEN marigolds heaped lie like ingots of gold,
And the snowy syringas their petals unfold,
I drink the warm sunshine, I dream in the grass,
I shout to the swallows that over me pass;
And thoughts of dull Winter go out of my mind,
For I lie in the lap of the Summer Wind,

*Singing so cheerily,
Living so merrily.*

But when I see stretched through the desolate night
The menacing hand of the weird Northern Light;
When the leaves have turned sere, and the tulips are
dead,

And the beautiful sumacs are burning with red;
Then a Vision of Death comes over my mind,
And I shrink from the touch of the Autumn Wind,

*Sighing so wearily,
Living so drearily.*

SONG

I

It was with doubt and trembling
I whispered in her ear:

O take her answer, bonny bird,
That all the world may hear!

2

Sing it, sing it, Silver-throat,
Upon the wayside tree,
How fair she is, how true she is,
And how she loveth me!

3

Sing it, sing it, Silver-throat,
And all the summer long
The other birds shall envy you
For knowing such a song!

BARBARA

BARBARA hath a falcon's eye,
And a soft white hand hath Barbara;
Beware — for to make you wish to die,
To make you as pale as the moon or I,
Is a pet trick with Barbara!

Merrily bloweth the summer wind,
But cold and cruel is Barbara!
And I, a Duke, stand here like a hind,
Too happy, i' faith, if I am struck blind
By the quick look of Barbara!

Ay, Sweetmou', you are haughty now:
Time was, time was, my Barbara,
When I covered your lips and brow
And bosom with kisses — faith, 'tis snow
That was all fire then, Barbara!

For whom shall you hold Agatha's ring?
 Whom will you love next, Barbara?
 Choose from the Court — your page or the King?
 Or one of those sleek-limbed fellows who bring
 Rose-colored notes "For Barbara"?

Love the King, by all that is good!
 Make eyes at him, sing to him, Barbara!
 I think you might please his royal mood
 For a month, and then — what then if he *should*
 Fling you aside, Queen Barbara?

You might die out there on the moor,
 (Where Rouel died for you, Barbara!)
 For the world, you know, sets little store
 On beauty, and charity closes the door
 On fallen divinity, Barbara!

But if his Majesty grew so cold —
 In the dead of night, my Barbara,
 I'd go to his chamber, Hate is bold,
 And strangle him there in his purple and gold,
 And lay him beside you, Barbara!

IT WAS A KNIGHT OF ARAGON

[SPANISH]

*"Fuerte qual azero entre armas,
 Y qual cera entre las damas."*

I

It was a Knight of Aragon, and he was brave to see,
 His helmet and his hauberk, and the greaves upon his
 knee:

WHEN THE SULTAN GOES TO ISPAHAN 125

His escuderos rode in front, his cavaliers behind,
With stained plumes and gonfalons, and music in the
wind.

2

It was the maid Prudencia, the rosebud of Madrid,
Who watched him from her balcony, among the
jasmynes hid.

“O, Virgin Mother!” quoth the Knight, “is that the
daybreak there?” —

It was the saintly light that shone above the maiden’s
hair!

3

Then he who crossed the Pyrenees to fight the dogs of
France,

Grew pale with love for her whose look had pierced
him like a lance;

And they will wed the morrow morn: beat softly,
happy stars! —

And, mind you, gallant cavaliers, how Venus conquers
Mars.

WHEN THE SULTAN GOES TO ISPAHAN

[ARABIC]

WHEN *the Sultan Shah-Zaman*
Goes to the city Ispahan,
Even before he gets so far
As the place where the clustered palm-trees are,
At the last of the thirty palace-gates,
The Pet of the Harem, Rose-in-Bloom,
Orders a feast in his favorite room —
Glittering squares of colored ice,

Sweetened with syrop, tinctured with spice,
Creams, and cordials, and sugared dates,
Syrian apples, Othmanee quinces,
Limes, and citrons, and apricots,
And wines that are known to Eastern princes:
And Nubian slaves, with smoking pots
Of spicèd meats and costliest fish
And all that the daintiest palate could wish,
Pass in and out of the golden doors!
Scattered over mosaic floors
Are anemones, myrtles, and violets,
And a musical fountain throws its jets
Of an hundred colors into the air!
The dusk Sultana loosens her hair,
And stains with the henna-plant the tips
Of her pearly nails, and bites her lips
Till they seem to pout like that rarest rose
Which only for Sultans buds and blows!

Then at a wave of her sunny hand,
The dancing-girls of Samarcand
Float in like mists from Fairy-land!
And to the low voluptuous swoons
Of music rise and fall the moons
Of their full brown bosoms. Orient blood
Runs in their veins, shines in their eyes:
And there, in this Eastern Paradise,
Filled with the fumes of sandal-wood,
And Khoten musk, and aloes and myrrh,
Sits Rose-in-Bloom on a silk divan,
Sipping the wines of Astrakhan;
And her Arab lover sits with her!
*That's when the Sultan Shah-Zaman
Goes to the city Ispahan!*

Now, when I see an extra light,
Flaming, flickering on the night
From my neighbor's window opposite,
I know as well as I know to pray,
I know as well as a tongue can say,
That the innocent Sultan Shah-Zaman
Has gone to the city Ispahan!
I rather think my neighbor's wife
Is leading this Orient sort of life!

L'ENVOI

MEN turn to angels when dead.
A thought grows into a Song:
Everything ripens with time,
Or I and my rhyme are wrong.

The May-moon blossomed, and grew,
And withered, the flower full-blown;
But out of the ruined moon
The beautiful June has grown!

O ye Poets that sit i' the sun,
Your brows with the laurel moist,
When shall I sit and sing with you,
Sweet-thoughted and silver-voiced?

POEMS AND BALLADS

INFELICISSIMUS

I

I WALKED with him one melancholy night
Down by the sea, upon the moonlit strands,
While in the dreary heaven the Northern Light
Beckoned with flaming hands —

II

Beckoned and vanished, like a woful ghost
That fain would lure us to some dismal wood,
And tell us tales of ships that have been lost,
Of violence and blood.

III

And where yon dædal rocks o'erhang the froth,
We sat together, Lycidas and I,
Watching the great star-bear that in the North
Guarded the midnight sky.

IV

And while the moonlight wrought its miracles,
Drenching the world with silent silver rain,
He spoke of life and its tumultuous ills:
He told me of his pain.

V

He said his life was like the troubled sea
With autumn brooding over it: and then
Spoke of his hopes, of what he yearned to be,
And what he might have been.

VI

"I hope," said Lycidas, "for peace at last,
I only ask for peace! My god is Ease!
Day after day some rude Iconoclast
Breaks all my images!

VII

"There is a better life than I have known —
A surer, purer, sweeter life than this:
There is another, a celestial zone,
Where I shall know of bliss."

VIII

So, close his eyes, and cross his helpless hands,
And lay the flowers he loved upon his breast;
For time and death have stayed the golden sands
That ran with such unrest!

IX

You weep: I smile: I know that he is dead,
So is his passion, and 'tis better so!
Take him, O Earth, and round his lovely head
Let countless roses blow!

A BALLAD OF NANTUCKET

"WHERE go you, pretty Maggie,
Where go you in the rain?"

"I go to ask the sailors
Who sailed the Spanish main,

"If they have seen my Willie,
If he'll come back to me —
It is so sad to have him
A-sailing on the sea!"

"O Maggie, pretty Maggie,
Turn back to yonder town;
Your Willie's in the ocean,
A hundred fathoms down!

"His hair is turned to sea-pelt,
His eyes are changed to stones,
And twice two years have knitted
The coral round his bones!

"The blossoms and the clover
Shall bloom and bloom again,
But never shall your lover
Come o'er the Spanish main!"

But Maggie never heeded,
For mournfully said she:

"It is so sad to have him
A-sailing on the sea!"

She left me in the darkness:
I heard the sea-gulls screech,

And burly winds were growling
With breakers on the beach!

The blithe bells of Nantucket,
What touching things they said,
When Maggie lay a-sleeping
With lilies round her head!

The parson preached a sermon,
And prayed and preached again —
But she had gone to Willie
Across the Spanish main!

THE SPENDTHRIFT'S FEAST

[FROM A PLAY]

TO-NIGHT we sup with Fiole —
We shall be delicately banqueted.
But do you know wherewith he pays for this?
No? Then I'll tell you; it is laughable.
A week ago his miserly father died —
Despite his swollen money-bags, he died —
But not a para of his hoarded wealth
Goes to Fiole. No; he builds a church
And gives it candles for a century,
Endows a hospital, and God knows what,
And only leaves that precious son of his
An antique drinking-cup all rough with gems
And moist with the grapes' bleeding — a shrewd hit
At Fiole, whose lady-love is Wine.
Neat, was it not? and worthy of the Count.
Well, this gold satire, this begemmed lampoon,
Fiole pawns to Jacobi the Jew,
And we're to dine on it!

A PASTORAL HYMN TO THE FAIRIES

I

O YE little tricky gods !
Tell me where ye sleep o' nights,
Where ye laugh and weep o' nights !
Is it in the velvet pods
Of the drooping violets —
In the purple palaces,
Scooped and shaped like chalices?
Or beneath the silver bend,
In among the cooling jets,
Of Iris-haunted, wood cascades
That tumble down from porphyry heights?
Do ye doze in rose-leaf boats
Where the dreamy streamlet floats,
Full of fish and phosphorus motes,
Through the heart of quiet glades?

II

When we crush a pouting bloom,
Ten to one we kill a Fairy !
May be that the light perfume
In our nostrils, sweet and airy,
Is the spirit of the Fairy
Floating upward. O, be wary !
Who can tell what size or make
The wilful little beings take?
There's a bird; now, who can say
'Tis a Robin or a Fay?
Why may not immortal things
Go on red and yellow wings!

Ah! if so the Fairies bide
Round us, with us, tell me why
Is their silver speech denied?
Are they deafened to my cry?

III

If you ask me why my song
Morn, and noon, and night complains,
I will tell you. . . . Long ago,
When the orchards and the lanes
Were, with fragrant apple-blooms,
White as in a fall of snow,
It was then we missed a Voice —
It was little Mary's!
For one morn she wandered forth,
In the springtime of the earth,
And was lost among the Fairies!
So I go in pensive moods
Through the shadows, by the brooks,
Talking to the solemn woods,
Peering into mossy nooks,
Asking sadly, now and then,
After tiny maids and men!
For my thoughts are with the child,
All my heart is gone with Mary's —
O, sad day she fled away,
And was lost among the Fairies!

THE UNFORGIVEN

NEAR my bed, there, hangs the picture, jewels could
not buy from me:
'Tis a Siren, a fair Siren, in her seaweed drapery,
Playing on a lute of amber, by the margin of a sea!

In the east, the rose of morning biddeth fair to blossom
soon,
But it never, never blossoms, in this picture; and the
moon
Never ceases to be crescent, and the June is always
June!

And the heavy-branched banana never yields its
creamy fruit;
In the citron trees are nightingales forever stricken
mute;
And the Siren sits, her fingers on the pulses of her lute!
In the hushes of the midnight, when my heliotropes
grow strong
With the dampness, I hear music — hear a quiet,
plaintive song —
A most sad, melodious utterance, as of some immortal
wrong —

Like the pleading, oft repeated, of a Soul that pleads
in vain,
Of a damnèd Soul repentant, that cannot be pure
again! —
And I lie awake and listen, with an agony of brain!
O, the mystical, wild music! how it melts into the
white
Of the moon that turns the sombre, brooding shadows
into light!
How it sobs itself to slumber in the quiet of the night!
And whence comes this mournful music? — whence,
unless it chance to be
From the Siren, the sad Siren, in her seaweed drapery,
Playing on a lute of amber, by the margin of a sea!

A POET'S GRAVE

IN this pleasant beechen shade
Where the wild-rose blossoms red,
Lieth one who, being dead,
Is neither matron, man, nor maid.

But once he wore the form of God,
And walked the earth with meaner things:
Death snapt him. See! above him springs
The very grass whereon he trod!

Let the world swing to and fro,
The slant rain fall, the wind blow strong:
Time cannot do him any wrong
While he is wrapped and cradled so!

Ah, much he suffered in his day:
He knelt with Virtue, kissed with Sin —
Wild Passion's child, and Sorrow's twin,
A meteor that had lost its way!

He walked with goblins, ghouls, and things
Unsightly, — terrors and despairs;
And ever in the starry airs
A dismal raven flapped its wings!

He died. Six people bore his pall;
And three were sorry, three were not:
They buried him, and then forgot
His very grave — the lot of all!

But strains of music here and there,
Weird children whom nobody owns,
Are blown across the fragrant zones
Forever in the midnight air!

INVOCATION TO SLEEP

I

THERE is a sleep for all things. On still nights
There is a folding of a million wings —
The purple honey-bees in unknown woods,
The speckled butterflies, and downy broods
In dizzy poplar heights:
Sleep for innumerable nameless things,
Sleep for the creatures underneath the sea,
And in the Earth, and in the starry Air! . . .
If easeful sleep so universal be,
Why will it not unburden me of care?
It comes to meaner things than my despair!
O weary, weary night, that brings no rest to me!

II

Spirit of dreams and silvern memories,
Delicate Sleep!
One who is sickening of his tiresome days,
Brings thee a soul that he would have thee keep
A captive in thy mystical domain,
'Mong wild Puck-fancies, and the grotesque train
That do inhabit slumber. Give his sight
Immortal shapes, and bring to him again
His Psyche that went out into the night!

III

Thou who dost hold the keys of rest,
Strew lotus-leaves and poppies on my breast —
Narcotic buds from misty Godland brought.

The flowers of Lethe! Then with viewless hand
Lead me into thy castle, in the land
Touched with all colors like a burning west,
The Castle o' Vision, where the feet of thought
Wander at will upon enchanted ground,
Fall like quick blossoms, making not a sound

In all the corridors. . . .

The bell sleeps in the belfry — from its tongue
A drowsy murmur floats into the air,
Like thistle-down. Slumber is everywhere.
The rook's asleep, and, in its dreaming, caws;
And silence mopes where orioles have sung;
The Sirens lie in grottos cool and deep:
The lily-wreathèd Naiades in streams:
But I, in chilling twilight, stand and wait
On the portcullis, at thy castle gate,
Yearning to see the golden door of dreams
Turn on the noiseless hinges of a sleep!

A GREAT MAN'S DEATH

TO-DAY a god died. Never any more
Shall man look on him. Never any more,
In hall or senate, shall his eloquent voice
Give hope to a sick nation. In his prime
Not all the world could daunt him: yet a ghost,
A poor mute ghost, a something we call Death,
Has silenced him forever! Let the land
Look for his peer: he hath not yet been found.

A crimson bird, of not so many days
As there are leaves upon the wildling rose,
Sings from yon sycamore; this violet
Sprung up an hour since from the fibrous earth:

At noon the rain fell, and to-night the sun
Will sink with its old splendor in the sea! —
And yet to-day a god died. . . . Nature smiles
On our mortality. A robin's death,
Or the unnoticed falling of a leaf,
Is more to her than when a great man dies!

THE BLUEBELLS OF NEW ENGLAND

THE roses are a regal troop,
And humble folks the daisies;
But, Bluebells of New England,
To you I give my praises —
To you, fair phantoms in the sun,
Whom merry Spring discovers,
With bluebirds for your laureates,
And honey-bees for lovers!

The south-wind breathes, and lo! ye throng
This rugged land of ours —
Methinks the pale blue clouds of May
Drop down, and turn to flowers!
By cottage doors along the roads,
You show your winsome faces,
And, like the spectre lady, haunt
The lonely woodland places.

All night your eyes are closed in sleep,
But open at the dawning;
Such simple faith as yours can see
God's coming in the morning!
You lead me by your holiness,
To pleasant ways of duty:
You set my thoughts to melody,
You fill me with your beauty.

And you are like the eyes I love,
So modest and so tender,
Just touched with morning's glorious light,
And evening's gentle splendor.
Long may the heavens give you rain,
The sunshine its caresses,
Long may the little girl I love
Entwine you in her tresses.

A LEGEND OF ELSINORE

O BUT she had not her peer!
In the kingdom far or near,
There were never such brown tresses, such a faultless
hand:
She had youth, and she had gold,
She had jewels all untold;
And many a lover bold
Wooed the Lady of the Land.

But, alack! they won not Maud,
Neither belted knight nor lord:
"Woo me not, for Jesus' sake, good gentlemen," she
said.

If they wooed, then, — with a frown
She would strike their passion down.
O she might have wed a crown
To the ringlets on her head!

From the dizzy castle tips,
She would watch the silent ships,
Like sheeted phantoms, coming and going evermore,
While the twilight settled down
On the sleepy little town.

On the gables peaked and brown,
That had sheltered kings of yore.

Her blue eyes drank in the sight,
With a full and still delight;
For it was as fair a scene as aught in Arcadie:
Through the yellow-beaded grain,
Through the hamlet-studded plain,
Like a trembling azure vein,
Ran the river to the sea.

Spotted belts of cedarwood
Partly clasped the widening flood;
Like a knot of daisies lay the hamlets on the hill;
In the ancient town below,
Sparks of light would come and go,
And faint voices, strangely low,
From the garrulous old mill.

Here the land, in grassy swells,
Gently rose; there, sank in dells
With wide mouths of crimson moss, and teeth of rock
and peat;
Here, in statue-like repose,
An old wrinkled mountain rose,
With its hoary head in snows
And musk-roses at its feet!

And so oft she sat alone,
In the turret of gray stone,
Looking o'er red miles of heath, dew-dabbled, to the
sea,
That there grew a village cry,
How Maud's cheeks did lose their dye,

As a ship, once, sailing by,
Melted on the sapphire lea.

“Lady Maud,” they said, “is vain;
With a cold and fine disdain
She walks o’er mead and moorland, she wanders by
the sea —
Sits within her tower alone,
Like Ænone carved in stone,
Like the queen of half a zone,
Ah, so icy-proud is she!”

When Maud walked abroad, her feet
Seemed far sweeter than the sweet
Wild flowers that would follow her with iridescent eyes;
And the spangled eglantine,
And the honeysuckle vine,
Running round and round the pine
Grew tremulous with surprise.

But she passed by with a stare,
With a half-unconscious air,
Making waves of amber froth, upon a sea of maize:
With her large and heavenly eyes
Looking through and through the skies,
As if God’s rich paradise,
Were growing upon her gaze!

Her lone walks led all one way,
And all ended at the gray
And the ragged, jagged rocks, that tooth the dreadful
beach;
There Queen Maud would stand, the Sweet!
With the white surf at her feet,

While above her wheeled the fleet
Sparrow-hawk with startling screech.

When the stars had blossomed bright,
And the gardens of the night
Were full of golden marigolds, and violets astir,
Lady Maud would sit alone,
And the sea with inner tone,
Half of melody and moan,
Would rise up and speak with her.

And she ever loved the sea —
God's half-uttered mystery —
With its million lips of shells, its never ceasing roar :
And 'twas well that, when she died,
They made Maud a grave beside
The blue pulses of the tide,
'Mong the crags of Elsinore.

One chill, red leaf-falling morn,
Many russet Autumns gone,
A lone ship with folded wings, lay dozing off the lea :
It had lain throughout the night,
With its wings of murky white
Folded, after weary flight —
The worn nursling of the sea !

Crowds of peasants flocked the sands ;
There were tears and clasping hands ;
And a sailor from the ship passed through the kirk-
yard gate.

Then amid the grass that crept,
Fading, over her who slept,
How he hid his face and wept,
Crying, "Late, alas ! too late !"

And they called her cold. God knows . . .
Underneath the winter snows,
The invisible hearts of flowers grow ripe for blossom-
ing!
And the lives that look so cold,
If their stories could be told,
Would seem cast in gentler mould,
Would seem full of love and spring.

PASSING ST. HELENA

AND this is St. Helena? This the spot
Haunted forever by an Emperor!
Methinks 'twere meet that such a royal ghost
Should pace these gloomy battlements by night!
— The ship veered off, and we passed out to sea:
And in the first fair moonrise of the month,
I watched the island, till it seemed a speck
No bigger than Astarte. Year by year,
The picture came and went upon my brain,
Like frost-work on the windows: in my dreams
I saw those jagged turrets of dull rock
Uplifted in the moonlight: saw the gulls
Darting in sudden circles; heard the low
And everlasting anthem of the sea!
And from the nether world a voice would come,
*Here did they bring the Corsican, and here
Died the chained eagle by these dismal cliffs!*

THE SET OF TURQUOISE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

COUNT OF LARA, *A poor nobleman.*

BEATRICE, *His wife.*

FLORIAN, { *Her dressing-maids.*

JACINTA, }

A PAGE, *for the occasion.*

The scene is laid in the vicinity of Mantua.

THE SET OF TURQUOISE

A DRAMATIC SKETCH

SCENE I. — COUNT *of* LARA'S *villa.* ' *A balcony overlooking the garden. Moonlight.* LARA and BEATRICE

LARA

THE third moon of our marriage, Beatrice!
It hangs i' the heaven, ripe and ready to drop,
Like a great golden orange —

BEATRICE

Excellent!
Breathe not the priceless simile abroad,
Or all the poetlings in Mantua
Will cut the rind of 't! Like an orange? yes,
But not so red, Count. Then it hath no stem,
And ripened out of nothing.

LARA

Critical!
Make thou a neater poesy for the moon.

BEATRICE

Now, as 'tis hidden by those drifts of cloud,
With one thin edge just glimmering through the dark,
'Tis like some strange, rich jewel of the east,
I' the cleft side of a mountain.

LARA

Not unlike!

BEATRICE

And that reminds me — speaking of jewels — love,
There is a set of turquoise at Malan's,
Ear-drops and bracelets and a necklace — ah!
If they were mine!

LARA

And so they should be, dear,
Were I Aladdin, and had slaves o' the lamp
To fetch me ingots. Why, then, Beatrice,
All Persia's turquoise-quarries should be yours,
Although your hand is heavy now with gems
That tear my lips when I would kiss its whiteness.
Oh! so you pout! Why make that full-blown rose
Into a bud again?

BEATRICE

You love me not.

LARA

A coquette's song.

BEATRICE

I sing it.

LARA

A poor song.

BEATRICE

You love me not, or love me over-much,
Which makes you jealous of the gems I wear!
You do not deck me as becomes our state,
For fear my grandeur should besiege the eyes
Of Monte, Clari, Marcus, and the rest —
A precious set! You're jealous, Sir!

LARA

Not I.
I love you.

BEATRICE

Why, that is as easy said
As any three short words; takes no more breath
To say, "I hate you." What, Sir, have I lived
Three times four weeks your wedded loyal wife,
And do not know your follies? I will wager
(If I could trap my darling into this!) [Aside.
The sweetest kisses I know how to give
Against the turquoise, that within a month
You'll grow so jealous — and without a cause,
Or with a reason thin as window-glass —
That you will ache to kill me!

LARA

Will you so?
And I — let us clasp hands and kiss on it.

BEATRICE

Clasp hands, Sir Trustful; but not kiss — nay, nay!
I will not pay my forfeit till I lose.

LARA

And I'll not lose the forfeit.

BEATRICE

We shall see.

BEATRICE [*enters the house singing*]

There was an old earl and he wed a young wife,
Heigh ho, the bonny.
And he was as jealous as Death is of Life,
Heigh ho, the nonny!
Kings saw her, and sighed;
And wan lovers died,

But no one could win the bright honey
 That lay on the lips of the bonny
 Young bride,
 Until Cupid, the royer, a-hearting would go,
 Then — heigh ho! [Exit.

LARA

She hath as many fancies as the wind
 Which now, like slumber, lies 'mong spicy isles,
 Then suddenly blows white furrows in the sea!
 Lovely and dangerous is my leopardess.
 To-day, low-lying at my feet; to-morrow,
 With great eyes flashing, threatening doleful death —
 With strokes like velvet! She's no common clay,
 But fire and dew and marble. I'll not throw
 So rare a wonder in the lap o' the world!
 Jealous? I am not jealous — though they say
 Some sorts of love breed jealousy. And yet,
 I would I had not wagered. It implies
 Doubt. If I doubted? Pshaw! I'll walk awhile
 And let the cool air fan me. [Paces the balcony.
 'Twas not wise.

It's only Folly with its cap and bells
 Can jest with sad things. She seemed earnest, too.
 What if, to pique me, she should overstep
 The pale of modesty, and give sweet eyes
 (I could not bear that, nay, not even that!)
 To Marc or Claudian? Why, such things have been
 And no sin dreamed of. I will watch her close.
 There, now, I wrong her. ~~She is wild enough,~~
 Playing the empress in her honeymoons:
 But untamed falcons will not wear the hood
 Nor sit on the wrist, at bidding. Yet if she,
 To win the turquoise of me, if she should —

Oh! cursèd jewels! would that they were hung
About the glistening neck of some mermaiden
A thousand fathoms underneath the sea!

SCENE II. — *A garden: the villa seen in the background. LARA stretched on the grass with a copy of Boccaccio's "Decameron" in his hand. Sunset*

LARA [*closing the book*]

A book for sunset — if for any time.
Right spicy tongues and pleasant wit had they,
The merry Ladies of Boccaccio!
What tales they told of love-in-idleness,
(Love old as earth, and yet forever new!)
Of monks who worshipped Venus — not in vain;
Of unsuspecting husbands, and gay dames
Who held their vows but lightly — by my faith,
Too much of the latter! 'Tis a sweet, bad book.
I would not have my sister or my wife
Caught by its cunning. In its golden words
Sin is so draped with beauty, speaks so fair,
That naught seems wrong but virtue! Yet, for all,
It is a sprightly volume, and kills care.
I need such sweet physicians. I have grown
Sick in the mind — at swords' points with myself.
I am mine own worst enemy!
And wherefore? wherefore? Beatrice is kind,
Less fanciful, and loves me, I would swear,
Albeit she will not kiss me till the month
Which ends our foolish wager shall have passed.
An hundred years, and not a single kiss
To sweeten time with! What a freakish dame!
[*A Page crosses the garden.*]

That page again! 'Tis twice within the week
 That slender-waisted, pretty-ankled knave
 Has crossed my garden at this self-same hour,
 Trolling a canzonetta with an air
 As if he owned the villa. Why, the fop!
 He might have doffed his bonnet as he passed.
 I'll teach him better if he comes again.
 What does he at the villa? Oh! perchance
 He comes in the evening when his master's out,
 To lisp soft romance in the ready ear
 Of Beatrice's dressing-maid; but then
 She *has* one lover. Now I think she's two:
 This gaudy popinjay would make the third,
 And that's too many for an honest girl!
 If he's not Florian's, he's Jacinta's, then?
 I'll ask the Countess — no, I'll not do that;
 She'd laugh at me, and vow *by the Madonna*
 This varlet was some noble in disguise,
 Seeking *her* favor. Then I'd crack his skull —
 That is, I would, were I a jealous man:
 But then I'm not. So he may come and go
 To Florian — or the devil! I'll not care.
 I would not build around my lemon-trees,
 Though every lemon were a sphere of gold,
 A lattice-fence, for fear the very birds
 Should sing, *You're jealous, you are jealous, Sir!*

SCENE III. — *A wooded road near the villa. The
 garden gate seen on the left. LARA leaning against
 a tree. Evening*

LARA

Sorrow itself is not so hard to bear
 As the thought of sorrow coming. Airy ghosts,

That work no harm, do terrify us more
 Than men in steel with bloody purposes.
 Death is not dreadful; 'tis the dread of death —
 We die whene'er we think of it!

I'll not

Be cozened longer. When the page comes out
 I'll stop him, question him, and know the truth.
 I cannot sit in the garden of a night
 But he glides by me in his jaunty dress,
 Like a fantastic phantom! — never looks
 To the right nor left, but passes gayly on,
 As if I were a statue. Soft, he comes,
 I'll make him speak, or kill him; then, forsooth,
 It were unreasonable to ask it. Soh!
 I'll speak him gently at the first, and then —

*[The Page enters by a gate in the villa-garden,
 and walks carelessly past the Count.]*

Ho! pretty page, who owns you?

PAGE

No one now.

I was the Signor Juan's, but am no more.

LARA

What, then, you stole from him?

PAGE

Oh! no, Sir, no.

He had so many intrigues on his hands,
 There was no sleep for me nor night nor day.
 Such carrying of love-favors and pink notes!
 He's gone abroad now, to break other hearts,
 And so I left him.

LARA

A frank knave.

PAGE

To-night
I've done his latest bidding —

LARA

As you should —

PAGE

A duty wed with pleasure — 'twas to take
A message to a countess all forlorn,
In yonder villa.

LARA [*aside*]

Why, the devil! that's mine!
A message to a countess all forlorn?
[*To the Page.*] In yonder villa?

PAGE

Ay, Sir. You can see
The portico among the mulberries,
Just to the left, there.

LARA

Ay, I see, I see.
A pretty villa. And the lady's name?

PAGE

Ah! that's a secret which I cannot tell.

LARA [*catching him by the throat*]

No? but you shall, though, or I'll strangle you!
In my strong hands your slender neck would snap
Like a brittle pipe-stem.

PAGE

You are choking me!
Oh! loose your grasp, Sir!

LARA

Then the name! the name!

PAGE

Countess of Lara.

LARA

Not her dressing-maid?

PAGE

Nay, nay, I said the mistress, not the maid.

LARA

And then you lied. Oh! woful, woful Time!—
Tell me you lie, and I will make you rich,
I'll stuff your cap with ducats twice a year!

PAGE [*smiling*]

Well, then — I lie.

LARA

Ay, now you lie, indeed!
I see it in the cunning of your eyes;
Night cannot hide the Satan leering there.
Only a little lingering fear of heaven
Holds me from dirking you between the ribs!
Wo! wo! [*Hides his face in his hands.*]

PAGE [*aside*]

~~I would I were well out of this.~~

LARA [*abstractedly*]

~~Such thin divinity! — So foul, so fair!~~

PAGE

What would you have? I will say nothing, then.

LARA

Say everything, and end it! Here is gold.
You brought a billet to the Countess — well?
What said the billet?

PAGE

Take away your hand,
And, by St. Mary, I will say it all.
There, now, I breathe. You will not harm me, Sir?
Stand six yards off, or I will not a word.
It seems the Countess promised Signor Juan
A set of turquoise —

LARA [*starting*]

Turquoise? Ha! that's well.

PAGE

Just so — wherewith my master was to pay
Some gaming debts; but yesternight the cards
Tumbled a golden mountain at his feet;
And ere he sailed, this morning, Signor Juan
Gave me a perfumed, amber-tinted note,
For Countess Lara, which, with some adieus,
Craved her remembrance morning, noon, and night;
Her prayers while gone, her smiles when he returned;
Then told his sudden fortune with the cards,
And bade her keep the jewels. That is all.

LARA

All? Is that all? 'T has only cracked my heart!
 A heart, I know of little, little worth —
 An ill-cut ruby, scarred and scratched before,
 But now quite broken! I have no heart, then:
 Men should not have, when they are wronged like this.
 Out of my sight, thou demon of bad news! *(Exit)*
~~O sip thy wine complacently to-night,~~
~~Lie with thy mistress in a pleasant sleep,~~
~~For thou hast done thy master (that's the Devil!)~~
~~This day a goodly service: thou hast sown~~
~~The seeds of lightning that shall scathe and kill!~~ *[Exit.]*

PAGE *[looking after him]*

I did not think 'twould work on him like that.
 How pale he grew! Alack! I fear some ill
 Will come of this. I'll to the Countess quick,
 And warn her of his madness. Faith, he foamed
 I' the mouth like Guido whom they hung last week
 (God rest him!) in the jail at Mantua,
 For killing poor Battista. Crime for crime! *[Exit.]*

2

SCENE IV. — BEATRICE'S chamber. *A Venetian screen on the right. As the scene opens, JACINTA places lamps on a standish, and retires to the back of the stage. BEATRICE sits on a fauteuil in the attitude of listening*

BEATRICE

Hist! that's his step. ^{there} Jacinta, place the lights
 Farther away from me, and get thee gone.

[Exit JACINTA.]

And Florian, child, keep you behind the screen,

Breathing no louder than a lily does;
For if you stir or laugh 'twill ruin all.

FLORIAN [*behind the screen*]

Laugh! I am faint with terror.

BEATRICE

Then be still.

Move not for worlds until I touch the bell,
Then do the thing I told you. Hush! his step
Sounds in the corridor, and I'm asleep!

[*LARA enters with his dress in disorder. He approaches within a few yards of BEATRICE, pauses, and looks at her.*]

LARA

Asleep! — and Guilt can slumber! Guilt can lie
Down-lidded and soft-breathed, like Innocence!
Hath dreams as sweet as childhood's — who can
tell? —

And paradisa! propheeties in sleep,
Its foul heart keeping measure, as it were,
To the silver music of a mandoline! —
Were I an artist, and did wish to paint
A devil to perfection, I'd not limn
A hornèd monster, with a leprous skin,
Red-hot from Pandemonium — not I.
But with my delicatest tints, I'd paint
A Woman in the splendor of her youth,
All garmented with loveliness and mystery!
She should be sleeping in a room like this,
With Angelos and Titians on the walls,
The grand old masters staring grandly down,
Draped round with folds of damask; in the alcoves,

Statues of Bacchus and Endymion,
 And Venus's blind love-child: a globed lamp
 Gilding the heavy darkness, while the odors
 Of myriad hyacinths should seem to break
~~Upon her ivory bosom as she slept;~~
 And by her side, (as I by Beatrice,)
 Her injured lord should stand and look at her!

[*Pauses.*]

How fair she is! Her beauty glides between
 Me and my purpose, like a pleading angel.
 Beauty — alack! 'tis that which wrecks us all;
 'Tis that we live for, die for, and are damned.
 A pretty ankle and a laughing lip —
 They cost us Eden when the world was new,
 They cheat us out of heaven every day!
 To-night they win another Soul for you,
~~Master of Darkness!~~ . . . [BEATRICE *sighs.*]
 Her dream's broke, like a bubble, in a sigh.
 She'll waken soon, and that — that must not be!
 I could not kill her if she looked at me.
 I loved her, loved her, by the Saints, I did —
 I trust she prayed before she fell asleep!

[*Unsheathes a dagger.*]

BEATRICE [*springing up*]

So, you are come — your dagger in your hand?
 Your lips compressed and blanchèd, and your hair
 Tumbled wildly all about your eyes,
 Like a river-god's? Oh! love, you frighten me!
 And you are trembling. Tell me what this means.

LARA

Oh! nothing, nothing — I did think to write
 A note to Juan, to Signor Juan, my friend,

(Your cousin and my honorable friend;)
 But finding neither ink nor paper here,
 Methought to scratch it with my dagger's point
 Upon your bosom, Madam! That is all.

BEATRICE

You've lost your senses!

LARA

Madam, no: I've found 'em!

BEATRICE

Then lose them quickly, and be what you were.

LARA

I was a fool, a dupe — a happy dupe.
 You should have kept me in my ignorance;
 For wisdom makes us wretched, king and clown.
 Countess of Lara, you are false to me!

BEATRICE

Now, by the Saints —

LARA

Now, by the Saints, you are!

BEATRICE

Upon my honor —

LARA

On your honor? fye!
 Swear by the ocean's feathery froth, for that
 Is not so light a substance.

BEATRICE

Hear me, love!

LARA

~~Lie to that marble Io! I am sick
To the heart with lying.~~

BEATRICE

You've the earache, Sir,
Got with too much believing.

LARA

Beatrice,
I came to kill you.

BEATRICE

Kiss me, Count, you mean!

LARA [*approaching her*]

If killing you be kissing you, why yes.

BEATRICE

Ho! come not near me with such threatening looks,
~~Or I'll call Florian and Jacinta, Sir,~~
And rouse the villa: 'twere a pretty play
To act before our servants!

LARA

Call your maids!
I'll kill them, too, and claim from Royalty
A golden medal and a new escutcheon,
~~For slaying three she-dragons — but you first!~~

BEATRICE

Stand back there, if you love me, or have loved!

[*As LARA advances, BEATRICE retreats to the table and rings a small hand-bell. FLORIAN, in the dress of a page, enters from behind the screen, and steps between them.*]

FLORIAN

What would my master, Signor Juan, say —

LARA [*starting back*]

The Page? now, curse him! — What? no! Florian?
Hold! 'twas at twilight, in the villa-garden,
At dusk, too, on the road to Mantua;
But here the light falls on you, man or maid!
Stop now; my brain's bewildered. ~~Stand you there,~~
And let me touch you with incredulous hands!
~~Wait till I come, nor vanish like a ghost!~~
If this be Juan's page, why, where is Florian?
If this be Florian, where's — by all the Saints,
I have been tricked!

FLORIAN [*laughing*]

By *two* Saints, with your leave!

LARA

The happiest fool in Italy, for my age!
And all the damning tales you fed me with,
~~You Sprite of Twilight, Imp of the old Moon! —~~

FLORIAN [*bowing*]

Were arrant lies as ever woman told;
And though not mine, I claim the price for them —
This cap stuffed full of ducats twice a year!

LARA

A trap! a trap that only caught a fool!
So thin a plot, I might have seen through it.
I've lost my reason!

FLORIAN

And your ducats!

BEATRICE

And
A certain set of turquoise at Malan's!

LARA [*catching* BEATRICE *in his arms*]

I care not, love, so that I have not lost
The love I held so jealously. And you —
You *do* forgive me? Say it with your eyes.
Right sweetly said! Now, mark me, Beatrice:
If ever man or woman, ghoul or fairy,
Breathes aught against your chastity — although
The very angels from the clouds drop down
To sign the charge of perfidy — I swear,
Upon my honor —

BEATRICE

Nay, be careful there!
Swear by the ocean's feathery froth —

LARA

I swear,
By heaven and all the Seraphim —

BEATRICE [*placing her hand on his mouth*]

I pray you!

LARA

I swear — if ever I catch Florian
In pointed doublet and silk hose again,
I'll —

BEATRICE

What?

LARA

Make love to her, by all that's true!

BEATRICE

O wisdom, wisdom! just two hours too late!
You should have thought of that before, my love.

LARA

It's not too late!

BEATRICE [*to* FLORIAN]

To bed, you dangerous page!
The Count shall pay the ducats. [*Exit* FLORIAN.]

LARA

And to-morrow
I'll clasp a manacle of blue and gold
On those white wrists. Now, Beatrice, come here,
And let me kiss both eyes for you!

SONNETS

THOSE forms we fancy shadows, those strange
lights
That flash on dank morasses, the quick wind
That smites us by the roadside — are the Night's
Innumerable children. Unconfined
By shroud or coffin, disembodied souls,
Uneasy spirits, steal into the air
From festering graveyards when the curfew tolls
At the day's death. Pestilence and despair
Fly with the sightless bats at set of sun.
And wheresoever murders have been done,
In stately palaces or lonesome woods,
Where'er a soul has sold itself and lost
Its high inheritance, there, hovering, broods
Some sad, invisible, accursèd Ghost!

Now, if the muses held me not in scorn,
I'd shape a poem, perfect, fair and round
As that thin band of gold wherewith I bound
Your slender finger our betrothal morn;
And in the circuit of this faultless rhyme
I'd place the dear initials of your name —
Three koh-i-noors to glisten for all time!
So would I lift my finger, and make fame
Couch, like that well-bred mastiff at your feet
Lapping your hand with dangerous tenderness.
And such a magic should this song possess,

Maidens would wear it, like a musk-pouch, sweet,
Upon their pinkish bosoms, night and day,
To keep foul dreams and untrue loves away.

SICK of myself and all that keeps the light
Of heaven away from me, I love to seek
This breezy hill, and on its highest peak
Sit down and watch the coming of the night.
'Tis ever a new miracle to me.
Men look to God for some mysterious sign,
For marriage feasts with water turned to wine,
For Christ to walk upon the troubled sea;
As if He did not to our sense unfold
Meanings as miraculous as of old!
Come watch with me the shaft of fire that glows
In yonder heaven: the fair, frail palaces,
The blue and crimson archipelagoes,
And great cloud-continent of sunset-seas.

LAND of Delight! you did not hold us long:
Three moons we spent with Hassan, but those three,
Like flies in amber, lie in memory —
Three languid moons, three moons of dream and song.
When Hassan played, the musky winds of night
Trembled, and turned to music with delight!
Lo! it was melody's insanity:
Now 'twas a honey-throated nightingale,
And now a sigh, a soul in agony,
A troubled dead-march with melodious wail,
A fall of tears — then it came daintily,
Like the perfumèd air that smote the sail
Of Cleopatra's golden barge, when she
Sailed down to Tarsus to Mark Antony.

"I AM not with you, Stoddard, in your sighs
Because the Hamadryads and the Fauns
Have left the moonlight lonely in the lawns!
Let science kill them with her piercing eyes,
Let death be Oberon's and Titania's doom,
Poor moonlight nothings! let the faery broods
Quit our demesne." . . . But that was in my room
In the hot city, not in these still woods
Where I have slept and dreamed the whole day long.
I did their pygmy majesties much wrong,
And have been punished (such was their device)
By them in mask; for see! this emerald spear
Of grass hath pricked a ruby on my ear,
And that fierce humble-bee hath stung me twice!

PAMPINEA AND OTHER POEMS
(1861)

PAMPINEA

AN IDYL

LYING by the summer sea
I had a dream of Italy.

Chalky cliffs and miles of sand,
Mossy reefs and salty caves,
Then the sparkling emerald waves,
Faded; and I seemed to stand,
Myself a languid Florentine,
In the heart of that fair land.
And in a garden cool and green,
Boccaccio's own enchanted place,
I met Pampinea face to face —
A maid so lovely that to see
Her smile is to know Italy!

Her hair was like a coronet
Upon her Grecian forehead set,
Where one gem glistened sunnily
Like Venice, when first seen at sea!
I saw within her violet eyes
The starlight of Italian skies,
And on her brow and breast and hand
The olive of her native land!

And knowing how in other times
Her lips were ripe with Tuscan rhymes
Of love and wine and dance, I spread

My mantle by an almond-tree,
"And here, beneath the rose," I said,
"I'll hear thy Tuscan melody!"

I heard a tale that was not told
In those ten dreamy days of old,
When Heaven, for some divine offence,
Smote Florence with the pestilence;
And in that garden's odorous shade,
The dames of the Decameron,
With each a loyal lover, strayed,
To laugh and sing, at sorest need,
To lie in the lilies in the sun
With glint of plume and golden brede!

And while she whispered in my ear,
The pleasant Arno murmured near,
The dewy, slim chameleons run
Through twenty colors in the sun;
The breezes broke the fountain's glass,
And woke æolian melodies,
And shook from out the scented trees
The bleachèd lemon-blossoms on the grass.

The tale? I have forgot the tale! —
A Lady all for love forlorn,
A Rose-bud, and a Nightingale
That bruised his bosom on the thorn;
A pot of rubies buried deep,
A glen, a corpse, a child asleep,
A Monk, that was no monk at all,
In the moonlight by a castle wall.

Now while the sweet-eyed Tuscan wove
The gilded thread of her romance —

Which I have lost by grievous chance —
The one dear woman that I love,
Beside me in our seaside nook,
Closed a white finger in her book,
Half vexed that she should read, and weep
For Petrarch, to a man asleep!
And scorning me, so tame and cold,
She rose, and wandered down the shore,
Her wine-dark drapery, fold in fold,
Imprisoned by an ivory hand;
And on a ledge of oölite, half in sand,
She stood, and looked at Appledore.

And waking, I beheld her there
Sea-dreaming in the moted air,
A siren sweet and debonair,
With wristlets woven of scarlet weeds,
And oblong lucent amber beads
Of sea kelp shining in her hair.
And as I thought of dreams, and how
The something in us never sleeps,
But laughs, or sings, or moans, or weeps,
She turned — and on her breast and brow
I saw the tint that seemed not won
From kisses of New England sun;
I saw on brow and breast and hand
The olive of a sunnier land!
She turned — and, lo! within her eyes
There lay the starlight of Italian skies!

Most dreams are dark, beyond the range
Of reason; oft we cannot tell
If they are born of heaven or hell:
But to my soul it seems not strange

That, lying by the summer sea,
With that dark woman watching me,
I slept and dreamed of Italy!

PYTHAGORAS

ABOVE the petty passions of the crowd
I stand in frozen marble like a god,
Inviolate, and ancient as the moon.
The thing I am, and not the thing Man is,
Fills these deep sockets. Let him moan and die;
For he is dust that shall be laid again:
I know my own creation was divine.
Strewn on the breezy continents I see.
The veined shells and burnished scales which once
Enwrapped my being — husks that had their use;
I brood on all the shapes I must attain
Before I reach the Perfect, which is God,
And dream my dream, and let the rabble go:
For I am of the mountains and the sea,
The deserts, and the caverns in the earth,
The catacombs and fragments of old worlds.

I was a spirit on the mountain tops,
A perfume in the valleys, a simoom
On arid deserts, a nomadic wind
Roaming the universe, a tireless Voice.
I was ere Romulus and Remus were;
I was ere Nineveh and Babylon;
I was, and am, and evermore shall be,
Progressing, never reaching to the end.

A hundred years I trembled in the grass,
The delicate trefoil that muffled warm
A slope on Ida; for a hundred years
Moved in the purple gyre of those dark flowers

That Grecian women strew upon the dead.
Under the earth, in fragrant glooms, I dwelt;
Then in the veins and sinews of a pine
On a lone isle, where, from the Cyclades,
A mighty wind, like a leviathan,
Ploughed through the brine, and from those solitudes
Sent Silence, frightened. To and fro I swayed,
Drawing the sunshine from the stooping clouds.
Suns came and went, and many a mystic moon,
Orbing and waning, and fierce meteors,
Leaving their lurid ghosts to haunt the night.
I heard loud voices by the sounding shore,
The stormy sea-gods, and from fluted conchs
Wild music, and strange shadows floated by,
Some moaning and some singing. So the years
Clustered about me, till the hand of God
Let down the lightning from a sultry sky,
Splintered the pine and split the iron rock;
And from my odorous prison-house a bird,
I in its bosom, darted: so we fled,
Turning the brittle edge of one high wave,
Island and tree and sea-gods left behind!

Free as the air, from zone to zone I flew,
Far from the tumult to the quiet gates
Of daybreak; and beneath me I beheld
Vineyards, and rivers that like silver threads
Ran through the green and gold of pasture-lands,
And here and there a hamlet, a white rose,
And here and there a city, whose slim spires
And palace roofs and swollen domes uprose
Like scintillant stalagmites in the sun;
I saw huge navies battling with a storm
By ragged reefs along the desolate coasts,
And lazy merchantmen, that crawled, like flies,

Over the blue enamel of the sea
To India or the icy Labradors.

A century was as a single day.
What is a day to an immortal soul?
A breath, no more. And yet I hold one hour
Beyond all price — that hour when from the sky
I circled near and nearer to the earth,
Nearer and nearer, till I brushed my wings
Against the pointed chestnuts, where a stream
That foamed and chattered over pebbly shoals,
Fled through the briony, and with a shout
Leaped headlong down a precipice; and there,
Gathering wild flowers in the cool ravine,
Wandered a woman more divinely shaped
Than any of the creatures of the air,
Or river-goddesses, or restless shades
Of noble matrons marvellous in their time
For beauty and great suffering; and I sung,
I charmed her thought, I gave her dreams, and then
Down from the sunny atmosphere I stole
And nestled in her bosom. There I slept
From moon to moon, while in her eyes a thought
Grew sweet and sweeter, deepening like the dawn —
A mystical forewarning! When the stream,
Breaking through leafless brambles and dead leaves,
Piped shriller treble, and from chestnut boughs
The fruit dropped noiseless through the autumn night,
I gave a quick, low cry, as infants do:
We weep when we are born, not when we die!
So was it destined; and thus came I here,
To suffer bravely as becomes my state,
One step, one grade, one cycle nearer God.

And knowing these things, can I stoop to fret,
And lie, and haggle in the market place,

Give dross for dross, or everything for naught?
No! let me sit above the crowd, and sing,
Waiting with hope for that miraculous change
Which seems like sleep; and though I waiting starve,
I cannot kiss the idols that are set
By every gate, in every street and park;
I cannot fawn, I cannot soil my soul:
For I am of the mountains and the sea,
The deserts and the caverns in the earth,
The catacombs and fragments of old worlds.

THE TRAGEDY

LA DAME AUX CAMELLIAS

THE "*Dame with the Camellias*" —

I think that was the play;
The house was packed from pit to dome
With the gallant and the gay,
Who had come to see the Tragedy,
And while the hours away!

There was the faint Exquisite,
With gloves and glass sublime;
There was the grave Historian,
And there the man of Rhyme,
And the surly Critic, front to front,
To see the play of Crime.

And there was heavy Ignorance,
And Vice in Honiton lace;
Sir Croesus and Sir Pandarus —
And the music played apace.
But of all that crowd I only saw
A single, single face!

'Twas that of a girl whom I had known
In the summers long ago,
When her breath was like the new-mown hay,
Or the sweetest flowers that grow —
When her heart was light, and her soul was white
As the winter's driven snow.

'Twas in our own New England
She breathed the morning air;
'Twas the sunshine of New England
That blended with her hair;
And modesty and purity
Walked with her everywhere!

All day like a ray of light she played
About old Harvey's mill;
And her grandsire held her on his knee
In the evenings long and still,
And told her tales of Lexington,
And the trench at Bunker's Hill —

And of the painted Wamponsags,
The Indians who of yore
Built their wigwams out of bark
In the woods of Sagamore;
And how the godly Puritans
Burnt witches by the score!

Or, touching on his sailor life,
He told how, years ago,
In the dark of a cruel winter night,
In the rain and sleet and snow,
The good bark *Martha Jane* went down
On the rocks off Holmes' Ho'!

The years flew by, and the maiden grew
Like a harebell in the glade;
The chestnut shadows crept in her eyes —
Sweet eyes that were not afraid
To look at heaven at morn or even,
Or any time she prayed!

She walked with him to the village church,
And his eyes would fill with pride
To see her walk with the man she loved —
To see them side by side!
Sweet Heaven! she were an angel now
If she had only died.

If she had only died! Alas!
How keen must be the woe
That makes it better one should lie
Where the sunshine cannot go,
Than to live in this sunny world of ours,
Where the happy blossoms blow!

Would she had wed some country clown
Before the luckless day
When her cousin came to that lowly home —
Her cousin Richard May,
With his city airs and handsome eyes,
To lead her soul astray!

One night they left the cottage —
One night in the mist and rain;
And the old man never saw his child
Nor Richard May again;
Never saw his pet in the clover patch,
In the meadow, nor the lane.

Ah! never was a heart so torn
Since this wild world began,
As day by day he looked for her,
This pitiful old man.
"Where's my pretty maid?" he said,
This pitiful old man.

Many a dreary winter came,
And he had passed away;
And we never heard of her who fled
In the night with Richard May;
Never knew if she were alive or dead
Till I met her at the play!

And there she sat with her great brown eyes,
They wore a troubled look;
And I read the history of her life
As it were an open book;
And saw her Soul, like a slimy thing
In the bottom of a brook.

There she sat in her rustling silk,
With diamonds on her wrist,
And on her brow a slender thread
Of pearl and amethyst.
"A cheat, 'a gilded grief!" I said,
And my eyes were filled with mist.

I could not see the players play,
I heard the music moan;
It moaned like a dismal autumn wind,
That dies in the woods alone;
And when it stopped I heard it still,
The mournful monotone!

What if the Count were true or false?
I did not care, not I;
What if Camille for Armand died?
I did not see her die.
There sat a woman opposite
Who held me with her eye!

The great green curtain fell on all,
On laugh, and wine, and woe,
Just as death some day will fall
'Twixt us and life, I know!
The play was done, the bitter play,
And the people turned to go.

And did they see the Tragedy?
They saw the painted scene;
They saw Armand, the jealous fool,
And the sick Parisian quean;
But they did not see the Tragedy —
The one I saw, I mean!

They did not see that cold-cut face,
Those braids of golden hair;
Or, seeing her jewels, only said,
"The lady's rich and fair."
But I tell you, 'twas the Play of Life,
And that woman played Despair!

TWO LEAVES FROM A PLAY

I. Hortense

O, BUT she loved him, and the death she died
Wrote Love across her bosom. Fainter hearts
Had wept and pined themselves into the grave.

She was not fashioned of such gossamer;
For one bleak midnight, robed as for a fête,
With all her splendor, and her jewels on,
She sucked quick poison from a finger-ring,
And so they found her, in the morning — dead.
The pearls lay on her bosom like pale flowers
When no wind stirs them; with one waxen hand
She held his crumpled letter: in the room
Sat Silence and white Slumber! So she died.

II. After the Masquerade

WE'VE danced the night out, Madaline.
Pleasure is sick, and Music's self hath grown
As languid as a weary ballet-girl!
There's not a dozen maskers in the hall.
How like the pictures on a wizard's glass
The party-colored pageant has swept by —
Fools with their bells, and Monarchs with their crowns,
Athenians, and bearded Mamelukes,
Death-heads and Satyrs, and weird shadows born
In the brains of crazy poets. Yet so real —
Such bitter mimicry! O, Madaline,
This is the very world in miniature:
We each wear dresses that become us not,
We each are maskers in a Carnival.
The spangles and the tinsel of our lives,
The soul in song, the jests above our wine,
Are pleasant lies that tell not what we are.
The Droll's at best a melancholy man;
His wit is only honey in a skull;
And though he glitter like a prism i' the light
His colors cannot hide the skeleton!
The Scholar is a cynic, and the Priest

A solemn epicurean in a cowl;
Philanthropy is politic: the Slave
Wears not such fetters as the Emperor.
And so, my love, Life plays at harlequin,
Smothers itself in ermine, or puts on
The icy front of virtue for effect.
A smile's a mask to hide a broken heart:
Fair words are masks, and all this blazoned world
Against the frozen opal in your ring,
There's no such mask as woman's tears may be!

KATHIE MORRIS

AN IDYL

I

Ah! fine it was that April time, when gentle winds
were blowing,
To hunt for pale arbutus blooms that hide beneath
the leaves,
To hear the slanting rain come down, and see the
clover growing,
And watch the airy swallows as they darted round
the eaves!

2

You wonder why I dream to-night of clover that was
growing
So many years ago, my wife, when we were in our
prime;
For, hark! the wind is in the flue, and Johnny says
'tis snowing,
And through the storm the clanging bells ring in
the Christmas time.

3

I cannot tell, but something sweet about my heart is
clinging.

A vision and a memory — 'tis little that I mind
The weary winter weather, for I hear the robins
singing,

And the petals of the apple blooms are ruffled in
the wind!

4

It was a sunny morn in May, and in the fragrant
meadow

I lay, and dreamed of one fair face, as fair and fresh
as spring:

Would Kathie Morris love me? then in sunshine and
in shadow

I built up lofty castles on a golden wedding ring!

5

O, sweet it was to dream of her, the soldier's only
daughter,

The pretty pious Puritan, that flirted so with Will;
The music of her winsome mouth was like the laugh-
ing water

That broke in silvery syllables by Farmer Philip's
mill.

6

And Will had gone away to sea; he did not leave her
grieving;

Her bonny heart was not for him, so reckless and
so vain;

And Will turned out a buccaneer, and hanged he was
for thieving
And scuttling helpless ships that sailed across the
Spanish Main.

7

And I had come to grief for her, the scornful village
beauty,
For, oh! she had a witty tongue could cut you like
a knife;
She scorned me with her haughty eyes, and I, in
bounden duty,
Did love her — loved her more for that, and wearied
of my life!

8

And yet 'twas sweet to dream of her, to think her wavy
tresses
Might rest some happy, happy day, like sunshine,
on my cheek;
The idle winds that fanned my brow I dreamed were
her caresses,
And in the robin's twitterings I heard my sweet-
heart speak.

9

And as I lay and thought of her, her fairy face adorn-
ing
With lover's fancies, treasuring the slightest word
she'd said,
'Twas Kathie broke upon me like a blushing summer
morning,
And a half-blown rosy clover reddened underneath
her tread!

10

Then I looked up at Kathie, and her eyes were full of
laughter:
"O, Kathie, Kathie Morris, I am lying at your
feet;
Bend above me, say you love me, that you'll love me
ever after,
Or let me lie and die here, in the fragrant meadow-
sweet!"

11

And then I turned my face away, and trembled at my
daring,
For wildly, wildly had I spoke, with flashing cheek
and eye;
And there was silence; I looked up, all pallid and
despairing,
For fear she'd take me at my word, and leave me
there to die.

12

The silken fringes of her eyes upon her cheeks were
drooping,
Her merciless white fingers tore a blushing bud
apart;
Then, quick as lightning, Kathie came, and kneeling
half and stooping,
She hid her bonny, bonny face against my beating
heart.

13

O, nestle, nestle, nestle there! the heart would give
thee greeting;
Lie thou there, all trustfully, in trouble and in pain;

This breast shall shield thee from the storm, and bear
its bitter beating,
These arms shall hold thee tenderly in sunshine
and in rain!

14

Old sexton! set your chimes in tune, and let there
be no snarling,
Ring out a joyous wedding hymn to all the listening
air;
And, girls, strew roses as she comes, the scornful,
brown-eyed darling —
A princess, by the wavy gold and glistening of her
hair!

15

Hark! hear the bells. The Christmas bells? O, no;
who set them ringing?
I think I hear our bridal bells and I with joy am
blind;
I smell the clover in the fields, I hear the robins sing-
ing.
And the petals of the apple blooms are ruffled in
the wind!

16

Ah! Kathie, you've been true to me in fair and
cloudy weather;
Our Father has been good to us when we've been
sorely tried:
I pray to God, when we must die, that we may die
together,
And slumber softly underneath the clover, side by
side.

HASHEESH

I

STRICKEN with thought, I staggered through the night;
The heavens leaned down to me with splendid fires;
The seven Pleiads, changed to magic lyres,
Made music as I went; and to my sight
A Palace shaped itself against the skies:
Great sapphire-studded portals suddenly
Opened upon vast Gothic galleries
Of gold and ebony, and I could see,
Through half-drawn curtains that let in the day,
Dim tropic gardens stretching far away!

2

Ah! what a wonder seized upon my soul,
When from that structure of the upper airs
I saw unfold a flight of crystal stairs
For my ascending. . . . Then I heard the roll
Of unseen oceans clashing at the Pole. . . .
A terror fell upon me . . . a vague sense
Of near calamity. O, lead me hence!
I shrieked, and lo! from out a darkling hole
That opened at my feet, crawled after me,
Up the broad staircase, creatures of huge size,
Fanged, warty monsters, with their lips and eyes
Hung with slim leeches sucking hungrily. —
Away, vile drug! I will avoid thy spell,
Honey of Paradise, black dew of Hell!

HESPERIDES

IF thy soul, Herrick, dwelt with me,
This is what my songs would be:

Hints of our sea-breezes, blent
 With odors from the Orient;
 Indian vessels deep with spice;
 Star-showers from the Norland ice;
 Wine-red jewels that seem to hold
 Fire, but only burn with cold;
 Antique goblets, strangely wrought,
 Filled with wine of happy thought;
 Bridal measures, dim regrets,
 Laburnum buds and violets;
 Hopeful as the break of day;
 Clear as crystal; fresh as May;
 Musical as brooks that run
 O'er yellow shallows in the sun;
 Soft as the glossy fringe that shades
 The eyelids of thy fragrant maids;
 Brief as thy lyrics, Herrick, are,
 And polished as the bosom of a star!

THE CRESCENT AND THE CROSS

KIND was my friend who, in the Eastern land,
 Remembered with me such a gracious hand,
 And sent this Moorish Crescent which has been
 Worn on the tawny bosom of a queen.

No more it sinks and rises in unrest
 To the soft music of her heathen breast;
 No barbarous chief shall bow before it more,
 No turban'd slave shall envy and adore!

I place beside this relic of the Sun
 A Cross of Cedar brought from Lebanon,
 Once borne, perchance, by some pale monk who trod
 The desert to Jerusalem — and his God!

Here do they lie, two symbols of two creeds,
Each meaning something to our human needs,
Both stained with blood, and sacred made by faith,
By tears, and prayers, and martyrdom, and death.

That for the Moslem is, but this for me!
The waning Crescent lacks divinity:
It gives me dreams of battles, and the woes
Of women shut in hushed seraglios.

But when this Cross of simple wood I see,
The Star of Bethlehem shines again for me,
And glorious visions break upon my gloom —
The patient Christ, and Mary at the Tomb!

SONG

I

THE chestnuts shine through the cloven rind,
And the woodland leaves are red, my dear;
The scarlet fuchsias burn in the wind —
Funeral plumes for the Year!

2

The Year which has brought me so much woe,
That if it were not for you, my dear,
I should wish the fuchsias' fire might glow
For me as well as the Year!

PISCATAQUA RIVER

1860

THOU singest by the gleaming isles,
By woods and fields of corn,

Thou singest, and the heaven smiles
Upon my birthday morn.

But I within a city, I,
So full of vague unrest,
Would almost give my life to lie
An hour upon thy breast.

To let the wherry listless go,
And, wrapped in dreamy joy,
Dip, and surge idly to and fro,
Like the red harbor-buoy!

To sit in happy indolence,
To rest upon the oars,
And catch the heavy earthy scents
That blow from summer shores:

To see the rounded sun go down,
And with its parting fires
Light up the windows of the town
And burn the tapering spires!

And then to hear the muffled tolls
From steeples slim and white,
And watch, among the Isles of Shoals,
The Beacon's orange light.

O, River! flowing to the main
Through woods and fields of corn,
Hear thou my longing and my pain
This sunny birthday morn!

And take this song which sorrow shapes
To music like thine own,
And sing it to the cliffs and capes
And crags where I am known!

THE LUNCH

A GOTHIC window, where a damask curtain
Made the blank daylight shadowy and uncertain:
A slab like agate on four eagle-talons
Held trimly up and neatly taught to balance:
A porcelain dish, o'er which in many a cluster
Plump grapes hung down, dead-ripe and without
lustre:

A melon cut in thin delicious slices:
A cake that seemed mosaic-work in spices:
Two China cups with golden tulips sunny,
And rich inside with chocolate like honey;
And she and I the banquet-scene completing
With dreamy words — and very dainty eating!

HAUNTED

A NOISOME mildewed vine
Crawls to the rotting eaves;
The gate has dropped from the rusty hinge
And the walks are strewn with leaves.

Close by the shattered fence
The red-clay road runs by
To a haunted wood, where the hemlocks groan
And the willows sob and sigh.

Among the dank lush flowers
The spiteful firefly glows,
And a woman steals by the stagnant pond
Wrapped in her burial clothes.

There's a dark blue scar on her throat,
And ever she makes a moan;

And the humid lizards shine in the grass,
And the lichens weep on the stone,

And the Moon shrinks in a cloud,
And the traveller shakes with fear,
And an Owl on the skirts of the wood
Hoots, and says, Do you hear?

Go not there at night,
For a spell hangs over all —
The palsied elms, and the dismal road,
And the broken garden wall.

O, go not there at night,
For a curse is on the place;
Go not there, for fear you meet
The Murdered face to face!

SONG

I

MERRY is the robin
That pipes away his care,
And merry is the mackerel
That leaps a yard in air!
And merry is the buttercup
Beneath the April sky,
And merry as the springtime,
Love, are you and I!

2

Now the robin's chilly,
And all his songs are done;
No more the spotted mackerel
Leaps silvery in the sun.

O, mournful is the scarlet leaf,
And mournful is the sky —
But merry as the springtime,
Love, are you and I!

MIRIAM'S WOE

MIRIAM at the planter's door,
Her child upon her knee,
Sat as the twilight gathered round
The vale of Nacoochee.

Sat with an anguish in her eyes,
And forehead bended low —
Sat like a statue carved in stone,
All pallid with her woe!

By dark bayou and cypress-swamp,
By rice-field and lagoon,
Her soul went wandering to the land
That scorches in the noon!

And on the lover of her youth
She turned her patient eyes,
And saw him sad, and faint, and sick
Beneath those alien skies.

She saw him pick the cotton blooms
And cut the sugar-cane —
A ring of iron on his wrist,
And round his heart a chain!

She saw him, when his work was done,
Sit down in some lone place,
To dream of her, and weep for her,
His hands across his face!

She heard the dear old violin
That he was wont to play
At twilight, in their courting time,
When life was sweet as May!

Then suddenly a catbird called
From out a neighboring tree,
And Miriam's soul came back again
To the vale of Nacoochee.

And closer, closer to her heart
She held the little child,
Who stretched its fragile hand to feel
Her bosom's warmth, and smiled.

But she — she did not own a touch
Of that fond little hand —
Great God! that such a thing should be
Within a Christian land!

THE ROBIN

FROM out the blossomed cherry-tops
Sing, blithesome Robin, chant and sing;
With chirp, and trill, and magic-stops
Win thou the listening ear of Spring!

For while thou lingerest in delight,
An idle poet, with thy rhyme,
The summer hours will take their flight
And leave thee in a barren clime.

Not all the autumn's brittle gold,
Nor sun, nor moon, nor star shall bring

The jocund spirit which of old
Made it an easy joy to sing!

So said a poet — having lost
The precious time when he was young —
Now wandering by the wintry coast
With empty heart and silent tongue.

IN THE OLD CHURCH-TOWER

1859

I

In the old church-tower
Hangs the bell;
And above it on the vane,
In the sunshine and the rain,
Cut in gold, Saint Peter stands,
With the keys in his two hands,
And all is well!

2

In the old church-tower
Hangs the bell;
You can hear its great heart beat,
Ah! so loud, and wild, and sweet,
As the parson says a prayer
Over wedded lovers there,
While all is well!

3

In the old church-tower
Hangs the bell,
Deep and solemn. Hark! again,

Ah! what passion, and what pain!
With her hands upon her breast,
Some poor Soul has gone to rest
Where all is well!

4

In the old church-tower
Hangs the bell —
An old friend that seems to know
All our joy and all our woe:
It is glad when we are wed,
It is sad when we are dead,
And all is well!

SONG

BLOW from the temples of the Sun,
Thou heavy-scented wind;
O, blow across the spicy isles
And strike the roses blind!

And kiss the eyes of my true love,
And tell me if she be
Not lovelier than the Khaleef's wife
Beyond the Indian sea!

LAMIA

Go on your way, and let me pass.
You stop a wild despair.
I would that I were turned to brass
Like that grim dragon there,
Which, couchant by the groined gate,
In weather foul or fair,

Looks down serenely desolate,
And nothing does but stare!

What care I for the burgeoned year,
The sad leaf or the gay?
Let Launcelot and Guinevere
Their falcons fly this day.

'Twill be as royal sport, pardie,
As falconers have tried
At Astolat — but let me be!
I would that I had died.

I met a woman in the glade:
Her hair was soft and brown,
And long bent silken lashes weighed
Her ivory eyelids down.

I kissed her hand, I called her blest,
I held her true and fair —
She turned to shadow on my breast,
And melted in the air!

And, lo! about me, fold on fold,
A golden serpent hung —
An eye of jet, a skin of gold,
A garnet for a tongue!

O, let the petted falcons fly
Right merry in the sun;
But let me be! for I shall die
Before the year is done.

THE MAN AND THE HOUR

As some rare jewel, sealed within a rock,
Would ne'er have glittered in the sunny air,
Had not the lightning or an earthquake's shock
Crumbled the ledge, and laid its splendor bare —
So do fine souls lie darkling in the earth
Until some mighty tumult heaves them forth.

Men of this land and lovers of these States!
What master-spirit from the dark shall rise,
And, with a will inviolate as fate's,
God-like and prudent, merciful and wise,
Do battle in God's name and set us right
Ere on our glory ruin broods and night!

December, 1860.

OUR COLORS AT FORT SUMTER

I

HERE'S to the Hero of Moultrie,
The valiant and the true!
True to our Flag — by land and sea,
Long may it wave for you!

2

May never traitor's touch pollute
Those colors of the sky —
We want them pure, to wrap about
Our heroes when they die!

January, 1861.

POEMS OF 1865

PROLOGUE

TO LILIAN

GOD fashioned Man from out the common earth,
But not from earth the Woman: so does she,
Even when fallen, ever bear with her
Some sign of Heaven, some mystic starry light.
Most gentle is she in all gentle deeds,
In all sweet offices of fireside-life;
A touch to cool the fevered brow of pain,
A voice to ease the heavy heart of care:
Most holy is she, since child Jesus drew
Life from the sacred circles of her breast.
Nor this alone, for, grappling with her fate
In ancient days, she buckled armor on,
And graspt the sword and sprung the battle-bolt,
And wore the Martyr's scarlet shroud of flame.
Of fair heroic women not the least
Was she of Bethulía, whose lithe hand
Forgot its native tenderness, and smote
The Assyrian despot on his conquered throne,
Whereby she blest the land for evermore
And won the love of Israel and the Lord.
To this uncrownèd queen of elder time
Belong the art and passion of my song;
And unto thee the song itself, since thou
Hast taught me reverence for all womankind.

JUDITH

I. *Judith in the Tower*

Now Holofernes with his barbarous hordes,
The scum of twenty servile sovereignties,
Crostr the Euphrates, laying waste the land
To Esdraelon, and, falling on the town
Of Bethulia, stormed it night and day
Incessant, till within the leaguered walls
The boldest captains faltered; for at length
The wells gave out, and then the barley failed,
And Famine, like a murderer masked and cloaked,
Stole in among the garrison. The air
Was filled with lamentation, women's moans
And cries of children: and at night there came
A fever, parching as a fierce simoom.
Yet Holofernes could not batter down
The brazen gates, nor make a single breach
With beam or catapult in those tough walls:
And white with rage among the tents he strode,
Among the squalid Tartar tents he strode
And curst the gods that gave him not his will,
And curst his captains, curst himself, and all;
Then, seeing in what strait the city was,
Withdrew his men hard by the fated town
Amid the hills, and with a grim-set smile
Waited, aloof, until the place should fall.
All day the housetops lay in sweltering heat;
All night the watch fires flared upon the towers;

And day and night with Israelitish spears
The bastions bristled.

In a tall square Tower,
Full-fronting on the vile Assyrian camp,
Sat Judith, pallid as the cloudy moon
That hung half-faded in the dreary sky;
And ever and anon she turned her eyes
To where, between two vapor-haunted hills,
The dreadful army like a caldron seethed.
She heard, far off, the camels' gurgling groan,
The clank of arms, the stir and buzz of camps;
Beheld the camp-fires, flaming fiends of night
That leapt, and with red hands clutched at the dark;
And now and then, as some mailed warrior stalked
Athwart the fires, she saw his armor gleam.
Beneath her stretched the temples and the tombs,
The city sickening of its own thick breath,
And over all the sleepless Pleiades.

A star-like face, with floating clouds of hair —
Merari's daughter, dead Manasses' wife,
Who (since the barley-harvest when he died),
By holy charities, and prayers, and fasts,
Walked with the angels in her widow's weeds,
And kept her pure in honor of the dead.
But dearer to her bosom than the dead
Was Israel, its Prophets and its God:
And that dread midnight, in the Tower alone,
Believing He would hear her from afar,
She lifted up the voices of her soul
Above the wrangling voices of the world:

“O are we not Thy children who of old
Trode the Chaldean idols in the dust,
And in Mesopotamia worshipped Thee?

“Didst Thou not lead us unto Canaan
For love of us, because we spurned the gods?
Didst Thou not bless us that we worshipped Thee?

“And when a famine covered all the land,
And drove us unto Egypt, where the King
Did persecute Thy chosen to the death, —

“Didst Thou not smite the swart Egyptians then,
And guide us through the bowels of the deep
That swallowed up their horsemen and their King?

“For saw we not, as in a wondrous dream,
The up-tost javelins, the plunging steeds,
The chariots sinking in the wild Red Sea?

“O Lord, Thou hast been with us in our woe,
And from Thy bosom Thou hast cast us forth,
And to Thy bosom taken us again:

“For we have built our temples in the hills
By Sinai, and on Jordan’s flowery banks,
And in Jerusalem we worship Thee.

“O Lord, look down and help us. Stretch Thy
hand
And free Thy people. Make us pure in faith,
And draw us nearer, nearer unto Thee.”

As when a harp-string trembles at a touch,
And music runs through all its quivering length,
And does not die, but seems to float away,

A silvery mist uprising from the string :
So Judith's prayer rose tremulous in the night,
And floated upward unto other spheres;
And Judith loosed the hair about her brows,
And bent her head, and wept for Israel.

Now while she wept, bowed like a lotus-flower
That watches its own shadow in the Nile,
A stillness seemed to fall upon the land,
As if from out the calyx of a cloud,
That blossomed suddenly 'twixt the earth and moon,
It fell, — and presently there came a sound
Of many pinions rustling in the dark,
And voices mingling, far and near, and strange
As sea-sounds on some melancholy coast
When first the equinox unchains the Storm.
Whereat she started, and with one quick hand
Brushed back the plenteous tresses from a cheek
That whitened like a lily, and so stood,
Nor breathed, nor moved, but listened with her soul;
And at her side, invisible, there leaned
An Angel mantled in his folded wings, —
To her invisible, but other eyes
Beheld the saintly countenance; for, lo!
Great clouds of spirits swoopt about the Tower
And drifted in the eddies of the wind.
The Angel stooped, and from his radiant brow,
And from the gleaming amaranth in his hair,
A splendor fell on Judith, and she grew,
From her black tresses to her archèd feet,
Fairer than morning in Arabia.
Then silently the Presence spread his vans,
And rose, — a luminous shadow in the air, —
And through the zodiac, a white star, shot.

As one that wakens from a trance, she turned,
And heard the twilight twitterings of birds,
The wind i' the turret, and from far below
Camp-sounds of pawing hoof and clinking steel;
And in the East she saw the early dawn
Breaking the Night's enchantment, — saw the Moon,
Like some wan sorceress, vanish in mid-heaven,
Leaving a moth-like glimmer where she died.

Now from the dewy lowlands floated up
Loose folds of mist that caught at every crag
And melted in the sunlight; then the Morn
Stood full and perfect on the jasper hills.
And Judith rose, and down the spiral stairs
Descended to the garden of the Tower,
Where, at the gate, lounged Achior, lately fled
From Holofernes; as she past she spoke:
"The Lord be with thee, Achior, all thy days."
And Achior saw the Spirit of the Lord
Had been with her, and, in a single night,
Worked such a miracle of form and face
As left her lovelier than all womankind
Who was before the fairest in Judæa.
But she, unconscious of God's miracle,
Moved swiftly on among a frozen group
Of statues that with empty, slim-necked urns
Taunted the thirsty Seneschal, until
She came to where, beneath the spreading palms,
Sat Chabris with Ozias and his friend
Charmis, governors of the leaguered town.
They saw a glory shining on her face
Like daybreak, and they marvelled as she stood
Bending before them with humility.

And wrinkled Charmis murmured through his beard:
"This woman walketh in the smile of God."

"So walk we all," spoke Judith. "Evermore
His light envelops us, and only those
Who turn aside their faces droop and die
In utter midnight. If we faint we die.
O, is it true, Ozias, thou hast sworn
To yield our people to their enemies
After five days, unless the Lord shall stoop
From heaven to help us?"

And Ozias said:
"Our young men die upon the battlements;
Our wives and children by the empty tanks
Lie down and perish."

"If we faint we die.
The weak heart builds its palace on the sand,
The flood-tide eats the palace of a fool:
But whoso trusts in God, as Jacob did,
Though suffering greatly even to the end,
Dwells in a citadel upon a rock
That wind nor wave nor fire shall topple down."

"Our young men die upon the battlements,"
Answered Ozias; "by the dusty wells
Our wives and children."

"They shall go and dwell
With Seers and Prophets in eternal joy!
Is there no God?"

"One only," Chabris spoke,
"But now His face is darkened in a cloud.
He sees not Israel."

“Is His mercy less
Than Holofernes’? Shall we place our faith
In this fierce bull of Assur, — are we mad
That we so tear our throats with our own hands?”
And Judith’s eyes flashed battle on the three,
Though all the woman quivered at her lip
Struggling with tears.

“In God we place our trust,”
Said old Ozias, “yet for five days more.”

“Ah! His time is not man’s time,” Judith cried,
“And why should we, the dust about His feet,
Decide the hour of our deliverance,
Saying to Him, *Thus shalt Thou do, and so?*”

Then gray Ozias bowed his head, abashed
That eighty winters had not made him wise,
For all the drifted snow of his long beard:
“This woman speaketh wisely. We were wrong
That in our anguish mocked the Lord our God,
The staff, the scrip, the stream whereat we drink.”
And then to Judith: “Child, what wouldst thou
have?”

“I know and know not. Something I know not
Makes music in my bosom; as I move
A presence goes before me, and I hear
New voices mingling in the upper air;
Within my hand there seems another hand
Close-prest, that leads me to yon dreadful camp;
While in my brain the fragments of a dream
Lie like a broken string of diamonds,
The choicest missing. Ask no more. I know
And know not. . . . See! the very air is white

With fingers pointing. Where they point I go:
Some Spirit drags me thither, and I go."

She spoke and paused: the three old men looked up
And saw a sudden motion in the air
Of white hands waving: and they dared not speak,
But muffled their thin faces in their robes,
And sat like those grim statues which the wind
Near some unpeopled city in the East
From foot to forehead wraps in desert dust.

"Ere thrice the shadow of the temple slants
Across the fountain, I shall come again."
Thus Judith softly: then a gleam of light
Played through the silken lashes of her eyes,
As lightning through the purple of a cloud
On some still tropic evening, when the breeze
Lifts not a single blossom from the bough:
"What lies in that unfolded flower of time
No man may know. The thing I can I will,
Leaning on God, remembering how He loved
Jacob in Syria when he fed the flocks
Of Laban, and what miracles He did
For Abraham and for Isaac at their need.
Wait thou the end; and, till I come, keep thou
The sanctuaries."

And Ozias swore
By those weird fingers pointing in the air,
And by the soul of Abraham gone to rest,
To keep the sanctuaries, though she came
And found the bat sole tenant of the Tower,
And all the people bleaching on the walls,
And no voice left. Then Judith moved away,
Her head bowed on her bosom, like to one

That moulds some subtle purpose in a dream,
And in his passion rises up and walks
Through labyrinths of slumber to the dawn.

When she had gained her chamber she threw off
The livery of sorrow for her lord,
The cruel sackcloth that begirt her limbs,
And from those ashen colors issuing forth,
Seemed like a golden butterfly new-slipt
From its dull chrysalis. Then, after bath,
She braided in the darkness of her hair
A thread of opals; on her rounded breast
Spilt precious ointment; and put on the robes
Whose rustling made her pause, half-garmented,
To dream a moment of her bridal morn.
Of snow-white samyte were the robes, and rich
With delicate branch-work, silver-frosted star,
And many a broidered lily-of-the-vale.
These things became her as the scent the rose,
For fairest things are beauty's natural dower.
The sun that through the jealous casement stole
Fawned on the Hebrew woman as she stood,
Toyed with the oval pendant at her ear,
And, like a lover, stealing to her lips
Taught them a deeper crimson; then slipt down
The tremulous lilies to the sandal straps
That bound her snowy ankles.

Forth she went,
A glittering wonder, through the crowded streets,
Her handmaid, like a shadow, following on.
And as in summer when the beaded wheat
Leans all one way, and with a longing look
Marks the quick convolutions of the wind:
So all eyes went with Judith as she moved,

All hearts leaned to her with a weight of love.
A starving woman lifted ghostly hands
And blest her for old charities; a child
Smiled on her through its tears, and one gaunt chief
Threw down his battle-axe and doffed his helm,
As if some bright Immortal swept him by.

So forth she fared, the only thing of light
In that dark city, thridding tortuous ways
By gloomy arch and frowning barbican,
Until she reached a gate of triple brass
That opened at her coming, and swung to
With horrid clangor and a ring of bolts.
And there, outside the city of her love,
The warm blood at her pulses, Judith paused
And drank the morning; then with silent prayers
Moved on through flakes of sunlight, through the wood
To Holofernes and his barbarous hordes.

II. *The Camp of Assur*

As on the housetops of a seaport town,
After a storm has lashed the dangerous coast,
The people crowd to watch some hopeless ship
Tearing its heart upon the unseen reef,
And strain their sight to catch the tattered sail
That comes and goes, and glimmers, till at length
No eye can find it, and a sudden awe
Falls on the people, and no soul may speak:
So, from the windy parapets and roofs
Of the embattled city, anxious groups
Watched the faint flutter of a woman's dress, —
Judith's, — who, toiling up a distant hill,
Seemed but a speck against the sunny green;

Yet ever as the wind drew back her robes,
They saw her from the towers, until she reached
The crest, and past into the azure sky.
Then, each one gazing on his neighbor's face,
Speechless, descended to the level world.

Before his tent, stretched on a leopard-skin,
Lay Holofernes, ringed by his dark lords, —
Himself the prince of darkness. At his side
His iron helmet poured upon the grass
Its plume of horse-hair; on his ponderous spear,
The flinty barb thrust half its length in earth,
As if some giant had flung it, hung his shield,
And on the burnished circuit of the shield
A sinewy dragon, rampant, silver-fanged,
Glared horrible with sea-green emerald eyes;
And as the sunshine struck across it, writhed,
And seemed a type of those impatient lords
Who, in the loud war-council here convened,
Gave voice for battle, and with fiery words
Opposed the cautious wisdom of their peers.
So seemed the restless dragon on the shield.

Baleful and sullen as a sulphurous cloud
Packed with the lightning, Holofernes lay,
Brooding upon the diverse arguments,
Himself not arguing, but listening most
To the curt phrases of the snow-haired chiefs.
And some said: "Take the city by assault,
And grind it into atoms at a blow."
And some said: "Wait. There's that within the
walls
Shall gnaw its heart out, — hunger. Let us wait."
To which the younger chieftains: "If we wait,

Ourselves shall starve. Like locusts we have fed
Upon the land till there is nothing left,
Nor grass, nor grain, nor any living thing.
And if at last we take a famished town
With fifty thousand ragged skeletons,
What boots it? We shall hunger all the same.
Now, by great Baäl, we'd rather die at once
Than languish, scorching, on these sun-baked hills!"

At which the others called them "fretful girls,"
And scoffed at them: "Ye should have stayed at home,
And decked your hair with sunny butterflies,
Like King Arphaxad's harlots. Know ye not
Patience and valor are the head and heart
Of warriors? Who lacks in either, fails.
Have we not hammered with our catapults
Those stubborn gates? Have we not hurled our men
Against the angry torrent of their spears?
Mark how those birds that wheel above yon wood,
In clanging columns, settle greedily down
Upon the unearthed bodies of our dead.
See where they rise, red-beaked and surfeited!
Has it availed? Let us be patient, then,
And bide the sovran pleasure of the gods."
"And when," quoth one, "our stores of meat are gone,
We'll even feed upon the tender flesh
Of these tame girls, who, though they dress in steel,
Like more the dulcet tremors of a lute
Than the shrill whistle of an arrow-head."

At this a score of falchions leapt in air,
And hot-breathed words took flight from bearded lips,
And they had slain each other in their heat,
These savage captains, quick with bow and spear,

But that dark Holofernes started up
To his full height, and, speaking not a word,
With anger-knitted forehead glared at them.
As they shrunk back, their passion and their shame
Gave place to wonder, finding in their midst
A woman whose exceeding radiance
Of brow and bosom made her garments seem
Threadbare and lustreless, yet whose attire
Outshone the purples of a Persian queen.

For Judith, who knew all the mountain paths
As one may know the delicate azure veins,
Each crossing each, on his belovèd's wrist,
Had stolen between the archers in the wood
And gained the straggling outskirts of the camp,
And seeing the haughty gestures of the chiefs,
Halted, with fear, and knew not where to turn;
Then taking heart, had silently approached,
And stood among them, until then unseen.
And in the air, like numerous swarms of bees,
Arose the wondering murmurs of the throng,
Which checking, Holofernes turned and cried,
"Who breaks upon our councils?" angrily,
But drinking then the beauty of her eyes,
And seeing the rosy magic of her mouth,
And all the fragrant summer of her hair
Blown sweetly round her forehead, stood amazed;
And in the light of her pure modesty
His voice took gentler accent unawares:
"Whence come ye?"

"From yon city."

"By our life,
We thought the phantom of some murdered queen

Had risen from dead summers at our feet!
If these Judæan women are so shaped,
Daughters of goddesses, let none be slain.
What seek ye, woman, in the hostile camps
Of Assur?"

"Holofernes."

"This is he."

"O good my lord," cried Judith, "if indeed
Thou art that Holofernes whom I seek,
And seeking dread to find, low at thy feet
Behold thy handmaid, who in fear has flown
From a doomed people."

"Wherein thou wert wise
Beyond the usual measure of thy sex,
And shalt have such observance as a king
Gives to his mistress, though our enemy.
As for thy people, they shall rue the hour
That brought not tribute to the lord of all,
Nabuchodonosor. But thou shalt live."

"O good my lord," thus Judith; "as thou wilt,
So would thy handmaid; and I pray thee now
Let those that listen stand awhile aloof,
For I have that for thine especial ear
Most precious to thee."

Then the crowd fell back,
Muttering, and half reluctantly, because
Her beauty drew them as the moon the sea —
Fell back and lingered, leaning on their shields
Under the trees, some couchant in the grass,

Broad-throated, large-lunged Titans overthrown,
Eying the Hebrew woman, whose sweet looks
Brought them a sudden vision of their wives
And longings for them: and her presence there
Was as a spring that, in Sahara's wastes,
Taking the thirsty traveller by surprise,
Loosens its silver music at his feet.

Thus Judith, modest, with down-drooping eyes:

“My lord, if yet thou holdest in thy thought
The words which Achior the Ammonite
Once spake to thee concerning Israel,
O treasure them, for in them was no guile.
True is it, master, that our people kneel
To an unseen but not an unknown God:
By day and night He watches over us,
And while we worship Him we cannot die,
Our tabernacles shall be unprofaned,
Our spears invincible; but if we sin,
If we transgress the law by which we live,
Our temples shall be desecrate, our tribes
Thrust forth into the howling wilderness,
Scourged and accursèd. Therefore, O my lord,
Seeing this nation wander from the faith
Taught of the Prophets, I have fled dismayed,
For fear the towers might crush me as they fall.
Heed, Holofernes, what I speak this day,
And if the thing I tell thee prove not true
Ere thrice the sun goes down beyond those peaks,
Then straightway plunge thy falchion in my breast,
For 'twere not meet that thy handmaid should live,
Having deceived the crown and flower of men.”

She spoke and paused: and sweeter on his ear
Were Judith's words than ever seemed to him
The wanton laughter of the Assyrian girls
In the bazaars; and listening he heard not
The never ceasing murmurs of the camp,
The neighing of the awful battle-steeds,
Nor the vain wind among the drowsy palms.
The tents that straggled up the hot hillsides,
The warriors lying in the tangled grass,
The fanes and turrets of the distant town,
And all that was, dissolved and past away,
Save this one woman with her twilight eyes
And the miraculous cadence of her voice.

Then Judith, catching at the broken thread
Of her discourse, resumed, to closer draw
The silken net about the foolish prince;
And as she spoke, from time to time her gaze
Dwelt on his massive stature, and she saw
That he was shapely, knitted like a god,
A tower beside the men of her own land.

“Heed, Holofernes, what I speak this day,
And thou shalt rule not only Bethulîa,
Rich with its hundred altars' crusted gold,
But Cades-Barne, Jerusalem, and all
The vast hill-country even to the sea:
For I am come to give unto thy hands
The key of Israel — Israel now no more,
Since she disowns her Prophets and her God.
Know then, O lord, it is our yearly use
To lay aside the first fruit of the grain,
And so much oil, so many skins of wine,
Which, being sanctified, are kept intact

For the High Priests who serve before our God
In the great temple at Jerusalem.
This holy food — which even to touch is death —
The rulers, sliding from their ancient faith,
Would fain lay hands on, being well-nigh starved;
And they have sent a runner to the Priests
(The Jew Ben Raphaim, who, at dead of night,
Shot like a javelin between thy guards),
Bearing a parchment begging that the Church
Yield them permit to eat the sacred corn.
But 'tis not lawful they should do this thing,
Yet will they do it. Then shalt thou behold
The archers tumbling headlong from the walls,
Their strength gone from them; thou shalt see the
spears

Splitting like reeds within the spearman's hands,
And the pale captains tottering like old men
Stricken with palsy. Then, O glorious prince,
Then with thy trumpets blaring doleful dooms,
And thy silk banners flapping in the wind,
With squares of men and eager clouds of horse
Thou shalt swoop down on them, and strike them
dead!

But now, my lord, before this come to pass,
Three days must wane, for they touch not the food
Until the Jew Ben Raphaim shall return
With the Priests' message. Here among thy hosts,
O Holofernes, will I dwell the while,
Asking but this, that I and my handmaid
Each night, at the twelfth hour, may egress have
Unto the valley, there to weep and pray
That God forsake this nation in its sin.
And as my prophecy prove true or false,
So be it with me."

Judith ceased, and stood,
Her hands across her bosom, as in prayer;
And Holofernes answered:

“Be it so.

And if, O pearl of women, the event
Prove not a drawf beside the prophecy,
Then there's no woman like thee — no, not one.
Thy name shall be renownèd through the world,
Music shall wait on thee, thou shalt have crowns,
And jewel-chests of costly camphor-wood,
And robes as glossy as the ring-dove's neck,
And milk-white mares, and chariots, and slaves:
And thou shalt dwell with me in Nineveh,
In Nineveh, the City of the Gods!”

At which the Jewish woman bowed her head
Humbly, that Holofernes might not see
How blanched her cheek grew. “Even as thou wilt,
So would thy servant.” At a word the slaves
Brought meat and wine, and placed them in a tent,
A silk pavilion, wrought with arabesques,
That stood apart, for Judith and her maid.
But Judith ate not, saying: “Master, no.
It is not lawful that we taste of these;
My maid has brought a pouch of parchèd corn,
And bread, and figs, and wine of our own land,
Which shall not fail us.” Holofernes said,
“So let it be,” and lifting up the screen
Past out, and left them sitting in the tent.

That day he mixt not with the warriors
As was his wont, nor watched them at their games
In the wide shadow of the terebinth-trees;

But up and down within a lonely grove
Paced slowly, brooding on her perfect face,
Saying her smooth words over to himself,
Heedless of time, till he looked up and saw
The spectre of the Twilight on the hills.

The fame of Judith's loveliness had flown
From lip to lip throughout the canvas town,
And as the evening deepened, many came
From neighboring camps, with frivolous excuse,
To pass the green pavilion — long-haired chiefs
That dwelt by the Hydaspes, and the sons
Of the Elymeans, and slim Tartar youths;
But saw not her, who, shut from common air,
Basked in the twilight of the tapestries.

But when night came, and all the camp was still,
And nothing moved beneath the icy stars
In their blue bourns, except some stealthy guard,
A shadow among shadows, Judith rose,
Calling her servant, and the sentinel
Drew back, and let her pass beyond the lines
Into the valley. And her heart was full,
Seeing the watch-fires burning on the towers
Of her own city: and she knelt and prayed
For it and them that dwelt within its walls,
And was refreshed — such balm there lies in prayer
For those who know God listens. Straightway then
The two returned, and all the camp was still.

One cresset twinkled dimly in the tent
Of Holofernes, and Bagoas, his slave,
Lay prone across the matting at the door,
Drunk with the wine of slumber; but his lord

Slept not, or, sleeping, rested not for thought
Of Judith's beauty. Two large lucent eyes,
Tender and full as moons, dawned on his sleep;
And when he woke, they filled the vacant dark
With an unearthly splendor. All night long
A stately figure glided through his dream;
Sometimes a queenly diadem weighed down
Its braided tresses, and sometimes it came
Draped only in a misty cloud of veils,
Like the King's dancing-girl at Nineveh.
And once it bent above him in the gloom,
And touched his forehead with most hungry lips.
Then Holofernes turned upon his couch,
And, yearning for the daybreak, slept no more.

III. *The Flight*

In the far east, as viewless tides of time
Drew on the drifting shallop of the Dawn,
A fringe of gold went rippling up the gray,
And breaking rosily on cliff and spur,
Still left the vale in shadow. While the fog
Folded the camp of Assur, and the dew
Yet shook in clusters on the new green leaf,
And not a bird had dipt a wing in air,
The restless captain, haggard with no sleep,
Stept over the curved body of his slave,
And thridding moodily the dingy tents,
Hives packed with sleepers, stood within the grove
Where he had loitered the preceding day;
There sat him down upon a scarp of rock,
Mantled with lichen, like a Druid throne,
And in the cool, gray twilight gave his thought

Wings; but however wide his fancies flew,
They circled still the figure of his dream.

He sat: before him rose the fluted domes
Of Nineveh his city, and he heard
The clatter of the merchants in the booths
Selling their merchandise: and now he breathed
The airs of a great river, sweeping down
Past carven pillars, under tamarisk boughs,
To where the broad sea sparkled: then he groped
In a damp catacomb, he knew not where,
By torchlight, hunting for his own grim name
On some sarcophagus: and as he mused,
From out the ruined kingdom of the Past
Glided the myriad women he had wronged,
The half-forgotten passions of his youth;
Dark-browed were some, with haughty, sultry eyes,
Imperious and most ferocious loves;
And some, meek blondes with lengths of flaxen hair, —
Daughters of Sunrise, shaped of fire and snow,
And Holofernes smiled a bitter smile
Seeing these spectres in his revery,
When suddenly one face among the train
Turned full upon him, — such a piteous face,
Blanched with such anguish, looking such reproach,
So sunken-eyed and awful in its woe,
His heart shook in his bosom, and he rose
As if to smite it, and before him stood
Bagoas, the bondsman, bearing in his arms
A jar of water, while the morning broke
In dewy splendor all about the grove.

Then Holofernes, vexed that he was cowed
By his own fantasy, strode back to camp,

Bagoas following, sullen, like a hound
That takes the color of his master's mood.
And with the troubled captain went the shapes
Which even the daylight could not exorcise.

“Go, fetch me wine, and let my soul make cheer,
For I am sick with visions of the night.
Some strangest malady of breast and brain
Hath so unnerved me that a rustling leaf
Sets my pulse leaping. 'Tis a family flaw,
A flaw in men else flawless, this dark spell:
I do remember when my grandsire died,
He thought a blackened Æthiope he had slain
Was strangling him; and, later, my own sire
Went mad with dreams the day before his death.
And I, too? Slave! go fetch me seas of wine,
That I may drown these fantasies — no, stay!
Ransack the camps for choicest flesh and fruit,
And spread a feast within my tent this night,
And hang the place with garlands of new flowers;
Then bid the Hebrew woman, yea or nay,
To banquet with us. As thou lov'st the light,
Bring her; and if indeed the gods have called,
The gods shall find me sitting at my feast
Consorting with a daughter of the gods!”

Thus Holofernes, turning on his heel
Impatiently; and straight Bagoas went
And spoiled the camps of viands for the feast,
And hung the place with flowers, as he was bid;
And seeing Judith's servant at the well,
Gave his lord's message, to which answer came:
“O what am I that should gainsay my lord?”
And Holofernes smiled within, and thought:

“Or life or death, if I should have her not
In spite of all, my mighty name would be
A word for laughter among womankind.”

“So soon!” thought Judith. “Flying pulse, be
still!

O Thou who lovest Israel, give me strength
And cunning such as never woman had,
That my deceit may be his stripe and scar,
My kisses his destruction! This for thee,
My city, Bethulía, this for thee!”

And thrice that day she prayed within her heart,
Bowed down among the cushions of the tent
In shame and wretchedness; and thus she prayed:
“O save me from him, Lord! but save me most
From mine own sinful self: for, lo! this man,
Though viler than the vilest thing that walks,
A worshipper of fire and senseless stone,
Slayer of children, enemy of God, —
He, even he, O Lord, forgive my sin,
Hath by his heathen beauty moved me more
Than should a daughter of Judæa be moved,
Save by the noblest. Clothe me with Thy love,
And rescue me, and let me trample down
All evil thought, and from my baser self
Climb up to Thee, that aftertimes may say:
*She tore the guilty passion from her soul, —
Judith the pure, the faithful unto death.*”

Half-seen behind the forehead of a crag
The evening-star grew sharp against the dusk,
As Judith lingered by the curtained door
Of her pavilion, waiting for Bagoas:
Erewhile he came, and led her to the tent

Of Holofernes; and she entered in,
And knelt before him in the cresset's glare
Demurely, like a slave-girl at the feet
Of her new master, while the modest blood
Makes protest to the eyelids; and he leaned
Graciously over her, and bade her rise
And sit beside him on the leopard-skins.
But Judith would not, yet with gentlest grace
Would not; and partly to conceal her blush,
Partly to quell the riot in her breast,
She turned, and wrapt her in her fleecy scarf,
And stood aloof, nor looked as one that breathed,
But rather like some jewelled deity
Ta'en by a conqueror from its sacred niche,
And placed among the trappings of his tent, —
So pure was Judith.

For a moment's space
She stood, then stealing softly to his side,
Knelt down by him, and with uplifted face,
Whereon the red rose blossomed with the white:
"This night, my lord, no other slave than I
Shall wait on thee with fruits and flowers and wine.
So subtle am I, I shall know thy wish
Ere thou canst speak it. Let Bagoas go
Among his people: let me wait and serve,
More happy as thy handmaid than thy guest."

Thereat he laughed, and, humoring her mood,
Gave the black bondsman freedom for the night.
Then Judith moved, obsequious, and placed
The meats before him, and poured out the wine,
Holding the golden goblet while he ate,
Nor ever past it empty; and the wine

Seemed richer to him for those slender hands.
So Judith served, and Holofernes drank,
Until the lamps that glimmered round the tent
In mad processions danced before his gaze.

Without, the moon dropt down behind the sky;
Within, the odors of the heavy flowers,
And the aromas of the mist that curled
From swinging cressets, stole into the air;
And through the mist he saw her come and go,
Now showing a faultless arm against the light,
And now a dainty sandal set with gems.
At last he knew not in what place he was.
For as a man who, softly held by sleep,
Knows that he dreams, yet knows not true from false,
Perplex between the margins of two worlds:
So Holofernes, flushed with the red wine.

Like a bride's eyes, the eyes of Judith shone,
As ever bending over him with smiles
She filled the generous chalice to the edge;
And half he shrunk from her, and knew not why,
Then wholly loved her for her loveliness,
And drew her close to him, and breathed her breath;
And once he thought the Hebrew woman sang
A wine-song, touching on a certain king
Who, dying of strange sickness, drank, and past
Beyond the touch of mortal agony, —
A vague tradition of the cunning sprite
That dwells within the circle of the grape.
And thus he heard, or fancied that he heard: —

“The small green grapes in countless clusters grew,
Feeding on mystic moonlight and white dew
And mellow sunshine, the long summer through:

"Till, with faint tremor in her veins, the Vine
Felt the delicious pulses of the wine;
And the grapes ripened in the year's decline.

"And day by day the Virgins watched their charge;
And when, at last, beyond the horizon's marge,
The harvest-moon droopt beautiful and large,

"The subtle spirit in the grape was caught,
And to the slowly dying Monarch brought,
In a great cup fantastically wrought,

"Whereof he drank; then straightway from his
brain
Went the weird malady, and once again
He walked the Palace, free of scar or pain,—

"But strangely changed, for somehow he had lost
Body and voice: the courtiers, as he crost
The royal chambers, whispered,—*The King's Ghost!*"

"A potent medicine for kings and men,"
Thus Holofernes; "he was wise to drink.
Be thou as wise, fair Judith." As he spoke,
He stoopt to kiss the treacherous soft hand
That rested like a snowflake on his arm,
But stooping reeled, and from the place he sat
Toppled, and fell among the leopard-skins:
There lay, nor stirred; and ere ten beats of heart,
The tawny giant slumbered. Judith knelt
And gazed upon him, and her thoughts were dark;
For half she longed to bid her purpose die,—
To stay, to weep, to fold him in her arms,
To let her long hair loose upon his face,

As on a mountain-top some amorous cloud
Lets down its sombre tresses of fine rain.
For one wild instant in her burning arms
She held him sleeping; then grew wan as death,
Relaxed her hold, and starting from his side
As if an asp had stung her to the quick,
Listened; and listening, she heard the moans
Of little children moaning in the streets
Of Bethulia, saw famished women pass,
Wringing their hands, and on the broken walls
The flower of Israel dying.

With quick breath
Judith blew out the tapers, all save one,
And from his twisted baldrick loosed the sword,
And grasping the huge hilt with her two hands,
Thrice smote the Prince of Assur as he lay,
Thrice on his neck she smote him as he lay,
And from the brawny shoulders rolled the head
Winking and ghastly in the cresset's light;
Which done, she fled into the yawning dark,
There met her maid, who, stealing to the tent,
Pulled down the crimson arras on the corse,
And in her mantle wrapt the brazen head,
And brought it with her; and a great gong boomed
Twelve, as the women glided past the guard
With measured footstep: but outside the camp,
Terror seized on them, and they fled like wraiths
Through the hushed midnight into the black woods,
Where, from gnarled roots and ancient, palsied trees,
Dread shapes, upstarting, clutched at them; and once
A nameless bird in branches overhead
Screeched, and the blood grew cold about their hearts.
By mouldy caves, the hooded viper's haunt,

Down perilous steep, and through the desolate gorge,
Onward they flew, with madly streaming hair,
Bearing their hideous burden, till at last,
Wild with the pregnant horrors of the night,
They dashed themselves against the City's gate.

The hours dragged by, and in the Assur camp
The pulse of life was throbbing languidly.
When from the outer waste an Arab scout
Rushed pale and breathless on the morning watch,
With a strange story of a Head that hung
High in the air above the City's wall, —
A livid Head with knotted, snake-like curls, —
And how the face was like a face he knew,
And how it turned and twisted in the wind,
And how it stared upon him with fixt orbs,
Till it was not in mortal man to stay;
And how he fled, and how he thought the Thing
Came bowling through the wheat-fields after him.
And some that listened were appalled, and some
Derided him; but not the less they threw
A furtive glance toward the shadowy wood.

Bagoas, among the idlers, heard the man,
And quick to bear the tidings to his lord,
Ran to the tent, and called, "My lord, awake!
Awake, my lord!" and lingered for reply.
But answer came there none. Again he called,
And all was still. Then, laughing in his heart
To think how deeply Holofernes slept
Wrapt in soft arms, he lifted up the screen,
And marvelled, finding no one in the tent
Save Holofernes, buried, as it were,
Head foremost in the canopies. He stoopt,

And drawing back the damask folds, beheld
His master, a grim torso, lying dead.

As in some breathless wilderness at night
A leopard, pinioned by a falling tree,
Shrieks, and the echoes, mimicking the cry,
Repeat it in a thousand different keys
By lonely heights and unimagined caves:
So shrieked Bagoas, and so his cry was caught
And voiced along the vast Assyrian lines,
And buffeted among the hundred hills.
Then ceased the tumult sudden as it rose,
And a great silence fell upon the camps,
And all the people stood like blocks of stone
In some deserted quarry: then a voice
Blown through a trumpet clamored: *He is dead!*
The Prince is dead! The Hebrew witch hath slain
Prince Holofernes! Fly, Assyrians, fly!

As from its lair the mad tornado leaps,
And, seizing on the yellow desert sands,
Hurls them in swirling masses, cloud on cloud:
So, at the sounding of that baleful voice,
A panic seized the mighty Assur hosts,
And flung them from their places. With wild shouts
Across the hills in pale dismay they fled,
Trampling the sick and wounded under foot,
Leaving their tents, their camels, and their arms,
Their horses, and their gilded chariots.
Then with a dull metallic clang the gates
Of Bethulia opened, and from each
A sea of spears surged down the arid hills
And broke remorseless on the flying foe, —
Now hemmed them in upon a river's bank,

Now drove them shrieking down a precipice,
Now in the mountain-passes slaughtered them,
Until the land, for many a weary league,
Was red, as in the sunset, with their blood.
And other cities, when they saw the rout
Of Holofernes, burst their gates, and joined
With trump and banner in the mad pursuit.
Three days before those unrelenting spears
The cohorts fled, but on the fourth they past
Beyond Damascus into their own land.

So, by God's grace and this one woman's hand,
The tombs and temples of the Just were saved;
And evermore throughout fair Israel
The name of Judith meant all noblest things
In thought and deed; and Judith's life was rich
With that content the world takes not away.
And far-off kings, enamoured of her fame,
Bluff princes, dwellers by the salt sea-sands,
Sent caskets most laboriously carved,
And cloths of gold, and papyrus scrolls, whereon
Was writ their passion; then themselves did come
With spicy caravans, in purple state,
To seek regard from her imperial eyes.
But she remained unwed, and to the end
Walked with the angels in her widow's weeds.

LEGENDS AND LYRICS

FRIAR JEROME'S BEAUTIFUL BOOK

A.D. 1200

THE Friar Jerome, for some slight sin,
Done in his youth, was struck with woe.
"When I am dead," quoth Friar Jerome,
"Surely, I think my soul will go
Shuddering through the darkened spheres,
Down to eternal fires below!
I shall not dare from that dread place
To lift mine eyes to Jesus' face,
Nor Mary's, as she sits adored
At the feet of Christ the Lord.
Alas! December's all too brief
For me to hope to wipe away
The memory of my sinful May!"
And Friar Jerome was full of grief,
That April evening, as he lay
On the straw pallet in his cell.
He scarcely heard the curfew-bell
Calling the brotherhood to prayer;
But he arose, for 'twas his care
Nightly to feed the hungry poor
That crowded to the Convent door.

His choicest duty it had been:
But this one night it weighed him down.
"What work for an immortal soul,
To feed and clothe some lazy clown!

Is there no action worth my mood,
No deed of daring, high and pure,
That shall, when I am dead, endure,
A well-spring of perpetual good?"

And straight he thought of those great tomes
With clamps of gold, — the Convent's boast, —
How they endured, while kings and realms
Past into darkness and were lost;
How they had stood from age to age,
Clad in their yellow vellum-mail,
'Gainst which the Paynim's godless rage,
The Vandal's fire, could naught avail:
Though heathen sword-blows fell like hail,
Though cities ran with Christian blood,
Imperishable they had stood!
They did not seem like books to him,
But Heroes, Martyrs, Saints, — themselves
The things they told of, not mere books
Ranged grimly on the oaken shelves.

To those dim alcoves, far withdrawn,
He turned with measured steps and slow,
Trimming his lantern as he went;
And there, among the shadows, bent
Above one ponderous folio,
With whose miraculous text were blent
Seraphic faces: Angels, crowned
With rings of melting amethyst;
Mute, patient Martyrs, cruelly bound
To blazing fagots; here and there,
Some bold, serene Evangelist,
Or Mary in her sunny hair:
And here and there from out the words
A brilliant tropic bird took flight;

And through the margins many a vine
 Went wandering, — roses, red and white,
 Tulip, wind-flower, and columbine
 Blossomed. To his believing mind
 These things were real, and the wind,
 Blown through the mullioned window, took
 Scent from the lilies in the book.

“Santa Maria!” cried Friar Jerome,
 “Whatever man illumined this,
 Though he were steeped heart-deep in sin,
 Was worthy of unending bliss,
 And no doubt hath it! Ah! dear Lord,
 Might I so beautify Thy Word!
 What sacristan, the convents through,
 Transcribes with such precision? who
 Does such initials as I do?
 Lo! I will gird me to this work,
 And save me, ere the one chance slips.
 On smooth, clean parchment I’ll engross
 The Prophet’s fell Apocalypse;
 And as I write from day to day,
 Perchance my sins will pass away.”

So Friar Jerome began his Book.
 From break of dawn till curfew-chime
 He bent above the lengthening page,
 Like some rapt poet o’er his rhyme.
 He scarcely paused to tell his beads,
 Except at night; and then he lay
 And tost, unrestful, on the straw,
 Impatient for the coming day, —
 Working like one who feels, perchance,
 That, ere the longed-for goal be won,

Ere Beauty bare her perfect breast,
Black Death may pluck him from the sun.
At intervals the busy brook,
Turning the mill-wheel, caught his ear;
And through the grating of the cell
He saw the honeysuckles peer;
And knew 'twas summer, that the sheep
In fragrant pastures lay asleep;
And felt, that, somehow, God was near.
In his green pulpit on the elm,
The robin, abbot of that wood,
Held forth by times; and Friar Jerome
Listened, and smiled, and understood.

While summer wrapt the blissful land,
What joy it was to labor so,
To see the long-tressed Angels grow
Beneath the cunning of his hand,
Vignette and tail-piece deftly wrought!
And little recked he of the poor
That missed him at the Convent door;
Or, thinking of them, put the thought
Aside. "I feed the souls of men
Henceforth, and not their bodies!" — yet
Their sharp, pinched features, now and then,
Stole in between him and his Book,
And filled him with a vague regret.

Now on that region fell a blight:
The corn grew cankered in its sheath;
And from the verdurous uplands rolled
A sultry vapor fraught with death, —
A poisonous mist, that, like a pall,
Hung black and stagnant over all.

Then came the sickness, — the malign
 Green-spotted terror, called the Pest,
 That took the light from loving eyes,
 And made the young bride's gentle breast
 A fatal pillow. Ah! the woe,
 The crime, the madness that befell!
 In one short night that vale became
 More foul than Dante's inmost hell.
 Men curst their wives; and mothers left
 Their nursing babes alone to die,
 And wantoned, singing, through the streets,
 With shameless brow and frenzied eye;
 And senseless clowns, not fearing God, —
 Such power the spotted fever had, —
 Razed Cragwood Castle on the hill,
 Pillaged the wine-bins, and went mad.
 And evermore that dreadful pall
 Of mist hung stagnant over all:
 By day, a sickly light broke through
 The heated fog, on town and field;
 By night the moon, in anger, turned
 Against the earth its mottled shield.

Then from the Convent, two and two,
 The Prior chanting at their head,
 The monks went forth to shrive the sick,
 And give the hungry grave its dead, —
 Only Jerome, he went not forth,
 But hiding in his dusty nook,
 "Let come what will, I must illumine
 The last ten pages of my Book!"
 He drew his stool before the desk,
 And sat him down, distraught and wan,
 To paint his darling masterpiece,

The stately figure of Saint John.
He sketched the head with pious care,
Laid in the tint, when, powers of Grace!
He found a grinning Death's-head there,
And not the grand Apostle's face!

Then up he rose with one long cry:
" 'Tis Satan's self does this," cried he,
"Because I shut and barred my heart
When Thou didst loudest call to me!
O Lord, Thou know'st the thoughts of men,
Thou know'st that I did yearn to make
Thy Word more lovely to the eyes
Of sinful souls, for Christ his sake!
Nathless, I leave the task undone:
I give up all to follow Thee, —
Even like him who gave his nets
To winds and waves by Galilee!"

Which said, he closed the precious Book
In silence with a reverent hand;
And, drawing his cowl about his face,
Went forth into the Stricken Land.
And there was joy in heaven that day, —
More joy o'er this forlorn old friar
Than over fifty sinless men
Who never struggled with desire!

What deeds he did in that dark town,
What hearts he soothed with anguish torn,
What weary ways of woe he trod,
Are written in the Book of God,
And shall be read at Judgment Morn.
The weeks crept on, when, one still day,

God's awful presence filled the sky,
 And that black vapor floated by,
 And, lo! the sickness past away.
 With silvery clang, by thorpe and town,
 The bells made merry in their spires,
 Men kissed each other on the street,
 And music piped to dancing feet
 The livelong night, by roaring fires!

Then Friar Jerome, a wasted shape, —
 For he had taken the Plague at last, —
 Rose up, and through the happy town,
 And through the wintry woodlands, past
 Into the Convent. What a gloom
 Sat brooding in each desolate room!
 What silence in the corridor!
 For of that long, innumerable train
 Which issued forth a month before;
 Scarce twenty had come back again!

Counting his rosary step by step,
 With a forlorn and vacant air,
 Like some unshriven churchyard thing,
 The Friar crawled up the mouldy stair
 To his damp cell, that he might look
 Once more on his beloved Book.

And there it lay upon the stand,
 Open! — he had not left it so.
 He grasped it, with a cry; for, lo!
 He saw that some angelic hand,
 While he was gone, had finished it!
 There 'twas complete, as he had planned!
 There, at the end, stood *Finis*, writ

And gilded as no man could do, —
Not even that pious anchoret,
Bilfrid, the wonderful, — nor yet
The miniatore Ethelwold, —
Nor Durham's Bishop, who of old
(England still hoards the priceless leaves)
Did the Four Gospels all in gold.
And Friar Jerome nor spoke nor stirred,
But, with his eyes fixed on that word,
He past from sin and want and scorn;
And suddenly the chapel-bells
Rang in the holy Christmas-Morn!

In those wild wars which racked the land
Since then, and kingdoms rent in twain,
The Friar's Beautiful Book was lost, —
That miracle of hand and brain:
Yet, though its leaves were torn and tost,
The volume was not writ in vain!

GARNAUT HALL

A.D. 1598

HERE or hereafter? In the body here,
Or in the soul hereafter, do we writhe,
Atoning for the malice of our lives?
Of the uncounted millions that have died,
Not one has slipped the napkin from his chin
And loosed the jaw to tell us: even he,
The intrepid Captain, who gave life to find
A doubtful way through clanging worlds of ice, —
A fine inquisitive spirit, you would think,
One to cross-question Fate complacently,

Less for his own sake than for Science's, —
Not even he, with his rich gathered lore,
Returns from that dark journey down to death.
Here or hereafter? Only this I know,
That, whatsoever happen afterwards,
Some men do penance on this side the grave.
Thus Regnald Garnaut for his cruel heart.

Owner and lord was he of Garnaut Hall,
A relic of the Norman conquerors, —
A quaint, rook-haunted pile of masonry,
From whose top battlement, a windy height,
Regnald could view his twenty prosperous farms;
His creaking mill, that, perched upon a cliff,
With outspread wings seemed ever taking flight;
The red-roofed cottages, the high-walled park,
The noisy aviary, and, nearer by,
The snow-white Doric parsonage, — all his own.
And all his own were chests of antique plate,
Horses and hounds and falcons, curious books,
Chain-armor, helmets, Gobelin tapestry,
And half a mile of painted ancestors.
Lord of these things, he wanted one thing more,
Not having which, all else to him was dross.

For Agnes Vail, the curate's only child, —
A little Saxon wild-flower that had grown
Unheeded into beauty day by day,
And much too delicate for this rude world, —
With that intuitive wisdom of the pure,
Saw that he loved her beauty, not herself,
And shrank from him, and when he came to speech
Parried his meaning with a woman's wit.
And Regnald's tender vanity was hurt.

"Why, then," snarled he, "if I had asked the Queen
To pick me some fair woman from the Court,
'Twere but the asking. A blind curate's girl,
It seems, is somewhat difficult, — must have,
To feed her pride, our coronet withal!"
And Agnes from that day avoided him,
Clinging more closely to the old man's side;
And in the chapel never raised an eye,
But knelt there like a mediæval saint,
Her holiness her buckler and her shield, —
That, and the golden floss of her long hair.

And Regnald felt that somehow he was foiled, —
Foiled, but not beaten. He would have his way.
Meanwhile he chafed; but shortly after this
Regnald received the sorest hurt of all.
For, one eve, lounging idly in the close,
Watching the windows of the parsonage,
He heard low voices in the alder trees,
Voices he knew, and one that sweetly said,
"Thine!" and he paused with choking heart, and saw
Eustace, his brother, and fair Agnes Vail
In the soft moonrise lingering with claspt hands.
The two past on, and Regnald hid himself
Among the brushwood, where his vulpine eyes
Dilated in the darkness as they past.
There, in the dark, he lay a bitter hour
Gnawing his nails, and then arose unseen
And crept away with murder in his soul.

Eustace! curse on him, with his handsome eyes!
Regnald had envied Eustace many a day,
Envied his fame, and that exceeding grace
And courtliness which he had learned at Court

Of Sidney, Raleigh, Essex, and the rest:
For when their father, lean Sir Egbert, died,
Eustace, whose fortune dangled at his thigh, —
A Damask blade, — had hastened to the Court
To line his purse, perchance to build a name;
And catching there the passion of the time,
He, with a score of doughty Devon lads,
Sailed with bold Drake into the Spanish seas;
Returning whence, with several ugly scars, —
Which made him lovelier in women's eyes, —
And many a chest of ingots, — not the less
These latter made him lovely, — sunned himself,
Sometimes at Court, sometimes at Garnaut Hall, —
At Court, by favor of the Virgin Queen,
For great Elizabeth had smiled on him.

So Regnald, who was neither good nor brave
Nor graceful, liked not Eustace from the start,
And this night hated him. With angry brows,
He sat in a bleak chamber of the Hall,
His fingers toying with his poniard's point
Abstractedly. Three times the ancient clock,
Bolt-upright like a mummy in its case,
Doled out the hour: at length the round red moon,
Rising above the sombre walnut trees,
Looked in on Regnald nursing his dark thought,
Looked in on the stiff portraits on the wall,
And dead Sir Egbert's empty coat-of-mail.

A quick step sounded on the gravel-walk,
And then came Eustace, humming a sea-song,
Of how the Grace of Devon, with ten guns,
And Master Raleigh on the quarter-deck,
Bore down and tackled the great galleon,

Madre de Dios, raked her fore and aft,
And took her bullion, — singing, light at heart,
His first love's first kiss warm upon his lip.
Straight onward came young Eustace to his death!
For hidden behind the arras near the stair
Stood Regnald, like the Dæmon in the play,
Grasping his rapier part-way down the blade
To strike the foul blow with its heavy hilt.
Straight on came Eustace, — blithely ran the song,
“*Old England's darlings are her hearts of oak.*”
The lights were out, and not a soul astir,
Or else the dead man's scabbard, as it clashed
Against the marble pavement when he fell,
Had brought a witness. Not a breath or sound,
Only the sad wind wailing in the tower,
Only the mastiff growling in his sleep,
Outside the gate, and pawing at his dream.

Now in a wing of that old gallery,
Hung with the relics of forgotten feuds,
A certain door, which none but Regnald knew,
Was fashioned like the panels of the wall,
And so concealed by carven grapes and flowers
A man could search for it a dozen years
And swear it was not, though his touch had been
Upon the very panel where it was.
The secret spring that opened it unclosed
An inner door of iron-studded oak,
Guarding a narrow chamber, where, perchance,
Some bygone lord of Garnaut Hall had hid
His threatened treasure, or, most like, bestowed
Some too adventurous antagonist.
Sealed in the compass of that stifling room,
A man might live, at best, but half an hour.

Hither did Regnald bear his brother's corse
And set it down. Perhaps he paused to gaze
A moment on the quiet moonlit face,
The face yet beautiful with new-told love!
Perhaps his heart misgave him, — or, perhaps ——
Now, whether 'twas some dark avenging Hand,
Or whether 'twas some fatal freak of wind,
We may not know, but suddenly the door
Without slammed to, and there was Regnald shut
Beyond escape, for on the inner side
Was neither spring nor bolt to set him free!

Mother of Mercy! what were a whole life
Of pain and penury and conscience-smart
To that half-hour of Regnald's with his Dead?

— The joyous sun rose over the white cliffs
Of Devon, sparkled through the walnut trees,
And broke the death-like slumber of the Hall.
The keeper fetched their breakfast to the hounds;
The smart, young ostler whistled in the stalls;
The pretty housemaid tripped from room to room;
And grave and grand behind his master's chair,
But wroth within to have the partridge spoil,
The senile butler waited for his lord.
But neither Regnald nor young Eustace came.
And when 'twas found that neither slept at Hall
That night, their couches being still unprest,
The servants stared. And as the day wore on,
And evening came, and then another day,
And yet another, till a week had gone,
The wonder spread, and riders sent in haste
Scoured the country, dragged the neighboring streams,

Tracked wayward footprints to the great chalk bluffs,
But found not Regnald, lord of Garnaut Hall.
The place that knew him knew him never more.

The red leaf withered and the green leaf grew.
And Agnes Vail, the little Saxon rose,
Waxed pale and paler, till the country-folk
Half guessed her fate was somehow intertwined
With that dark house. When her pure soul had
past, —

Just as a perfume floats from out the world, —
Wild tales were told of how the brothers loved
The self-same maid, whom neither one would wed
Because the other loved her as his life;
And that the two, at midnight, in despair,
From one sheer cliff plunged headlong in the sea.
And when, at night, the hoarse east-wind rose high,
Rattled the lintels, clamoring at the door,
The children huddled closer round the hearth
And whispered very softly with themselves,
“That’s Master Regnald looking for his Bride!”

The red leaf withered and the green leaf grew.
Decay and dolor settled on the Hall.
The wind went howling in the dismal rooms,
Rustling the arras; and the wainscot-mouse
Gnawed through the mighty Garnauts on the wall,
And made a lodging for her glossy young
In dead Sir Egbert’s empty coat-of-mail;
The griffon dropt from off the blazoned shield;
The stables rotted ; and a poisonous vine
Stretched its rank nets across the lonely lawn.
For no one went there, — ’twas a haunted spot.

A legend killed it for a kindly home,—
A grim estate, which every heir in turn
Left to the orgies of the wind and rain,
The newt, the toad, the spider, and the mouse.

The red leaf withered and the green leaf grew.
And once, 'tis said, the Queen reached out her hand
And let it rest on Cecil's velvet sleeve,
And spoke: "I prithee, Cecil, tell us now,
Was 't ever known what happened to those men, —
Those Garnauts? — Were they never, never found?"
The weasel face had fain looked wise for her,
But no one of that century ever knew.

The red leaf withered and the green leaf grew.
And in that year King James the Second died.
The land changed owners, and the new-made lord
Sent down his workmen to revamp the Hall
And make the waste place blossom as the rose.
By chance, a workman in the eastern wing,
Fitting the cornice, stumbled on a door,
Which creaked, and seemed to open of itself;
And there within the chamber, on the flags,
He saw two figures in outlandish guise
Of hose and doublet, — one stretched out full-length,
And one half fallen forward on his breast,
Holding the other's hand with vice-like grip:
One face was calm, the other sad as death,
With something in it of a pleading look,
As might befall a man that dies at prayer.
Amazed, the workman hallooed to his mates
To see the wonder; but ere they could come,
The figures crumbled and were shapeless dust.

THE LADY OF CASTELNOIRE

A.D. 1700

I

BRÉTAGNE had not her peer. In the Province far or
near
There were never such brown tresses, such a faultless
hand:
She had youth, and she had gold, she had jewels all
untold,
And many a lover bold wooed the Lady of the Land.

2

But she, with queenliest grace, bent low her pallid
face,
And "Woo me not, for Jesus' sake, fair gentlemen,"
she said.
If they woo'd, then — with a frown she would strike
their passion down:
She might have wed a crown to the ringlets on her head.

3

From the dizzy castle-tips, hour by hour she watched
the ships,
Like sheeted phantoms coming and going evermore,
While the twilight settled down on the sleepy seaport
town,
On the gables peaked and brown, that had sheltered
kings of yore.

4

Dusky belts of cedar-wood partly claspt the widening
flood;
Like a knot of daisies lay the hamlets on the hill;
In the hostelry below sparks of light would come and
go,
And faint voices, strangely low, from the garrulous
old mill.

5

Here the land in grassy swells gently broke; there
sunk in dells
With mosses green and purple, and prongs of rock
and peat;
Here, in statue-like repose, an old wrinkled mountain
rose,
With its hoary head in snows, and wild-roses at its
feet.

6

And so oft she sat alone in the turret of gray stone,
And looked across the moorland, so woful, to the sea,
That there grew a village-cry, how her cheek did lose
its dye,
As a ship, once, sailing by, faded on the sapphire lea.

7

Her few walks led all one way, and all ended at the
gray
And ragged, jagged rocks that fringe the lonesome
beach;

There she would stand, the Sweet! with the white
surf at her feet,
While above her wheeled the fleet sparrow-hawk
with startling screech.

8

And she ever loved the sea, — God's half-uttered
mystery, —
With its million lips of shells, its never ceasing roar:
And 'twas well that, when she died, they made her a
grave beside
The blue pulses of the tide, by the towers of Castel-
noire.

9

Now, one chill November morn, many russet autumns
gone,
A strange ship with folded wings lay dozing off the lea;
It had lain throughout the night with its wings of
murky white
Folded, after weary flight, — the worn nursling of the
sea.

10

Crowds of peasants flocked the sands; there were
tears and clasping hands;
And a sailor from the ship stalked through the kirk-
yard gate.
Then amid the grass that crept, fading, over her who
slept,
How he hid his face and wept, crying, *Late, alas!
too late!*

II

And they called her cold. God knows. . . . Under-
neath the winter snows
The invisible hearts of flowers grew ripe for blossoming!
And the lives that look so cold, if their stories could
be told,
Would seem cast in gentler mould, would seem full
of love and spring.

AMONTILLADO

VINTAGE, 1826

I

RAFTERS black with smoke,
White with sand the floor is,
Twenty whiskered Dons
Calling to Dolores, —
Tawny flower of Spain,
Empress of the larder,
Keeper of the wines
In this old posada.

2

Hither, light-of-foot,
Dolores, Hebe, Circe! —
Pretty Spanish girl,
With not a bit of mercy!
Here I'm sad and sick,
Faint and thirsty very,
And she doesn't bring
The Amontillado Sherry!

3

Thank you. Breath of June!
Now my heart beats freer:
Kisses for your hand,
Amigita mia!
You shall live in song,
Ripe and warm and cheery,
Mellowing with years,
Like Amontillado Sherry.

4

Evil spirits, fly!
Care, begone, blue dragon!
Only shapes of joy
Are sculptured on the flagon:
Lyrics, — repartees, —
Kisses, — all that's merry,
Rise to touch the lip
In Amontillado Sherry!

5

Here be worth and wealth,
And love, the arch enchanter;
Here the golden blood
Of saints, in this decanter!
When old Charon comes
To row me o'er his ferry,
I'll bribe him with a case
Of Amontillado Sherry!

6

While the earth spins round
And the stars lean over,
May this amber sprite
Never lack a lover.
Blessèd be the man
Who lured her from the berry,
And blest the girl who brings
The Amontillado Sherry.

7

What! the flagon's dry?
Hark, old Time's confession. —
Both hands crost at XII,
Owning his transgression!
Pray, old monk! for all
Generous souls and merry,
May they have their fill
Of Amontillado Sherry!

CASTLES

THERE is a picture in my brain
That only fades to come again, —
The sunlight, through a veil of rain
To leeward, gilding
A narrow stretch of brown sea-sand,
A lighthouse half a league from land,
And two young lovers, hand in hand,
A castle-building.

Upon the budded apple trees
The robins sing by twos and threes,
And ever at the faintest breeze
 Down drops a blossom;
And ever would that lover be
The wind that robs the burgeoned tree,
And lifts the soft tress daintily
 On Beauty's bosom.

Ah, graybeard, what a happy thing
It was, when life was in its spring,
To peep through love's betrothal ring
 At Fields Elysian,
To move and breathe in magic air,
To think that all that seems is fair, —
Ah, ripe young mouth and golden hair,
 Thou pretty vision!

Well, well, I think not on these two
But the old wound breaks out anew,
And the old dream, as if 'twere true,
 In my heart nestles;
Then tears come welling to my eyes
For yonder, all in saintly guise,
As 'twere, a sweet dead woman lies
 Upon the trestles!

ROBIN BADFELLOW

FOUR bluish eggs all in the moss!
Soft-lined home on the cherry-bough!
Life is trouble, and love is loss, —
 There's only one robin now!

O robin up in the cherry tree,
Singing your soul away,
Great is the grief befallen me,
And how can you be so gay?

Long ago when you cried in the nest,
The last of the sickly brood,
Scarcely a pin-feather warming your breast,
Who was it brought you food?

Who said, "Music, come fill his throat,
Or ever the May be fled"?
Who was it loved the wee sweet note
And the bosom's sea-shell red?

Who said, "Cherries, grow ripe and big,
Black and ripe for this bird of mine"?
How little bright-bosom bends the twig,
Sipping the black-heart's wine!

Now that my days and nights are woe,
Now that I weep for love's dear sake, —
There you go singing away as though
Never a heart could break!

THE LILY OF LOCH-INE

SHE was very, very fair,
Like a Saint in her blonde hair, —
Like Raphael's Madonna,
With a certain shade of care
And a glory breaking on her!

In the kirkyard let her lie,
Let the thistles and the burs
Cover up the twofold life,
The sinless life and hers.
God have mercy on that day
When the grave gives up the Dead
And the World shall pass away.

Now Sir Rohan sails the sea,
Loud he laughs above his wine,
And he never, never thinks
Of the Lily of Loch-Ine.
God have mercy on that day
When the grave gives up the Dead
And the World shall pass away.

DECEMBER

1863

ONLY the sea intoning,
Only the wainscot-mouse,
Only the wild wind moaning
Over the lonely house.

Darkest of all Decembers
Ever my life has known,
Sitting here by the embers,
Stunned and helpless, alone, —

Dreaming of two graves lying
Out in the damp and chill;
One where the buzzard, flying,
Pauses at Malvern Hill:

The other, — alas! the pillows
Of that uneasy bed
Rise and fall with the billows
Over our sailor's head.

Theirs the heroic story, —
Died, by frigate and town!
Theirs the Calm and the Glory,
Theirs the Cross and the Crown.

Mine to linger and languish
Here by the wintry sea.
Ah, faint heart! in thy anguish,
What is there left to thee?

Only the sea intoning,
Only the wainscot-mouse,
Only the wild wind moaning
Over the lonely house.

THE SHEIK'S WELCOME

BECAUSE thou com'st, a weary guest,
Unto my tent, I bid thee rest.
This cruse of oil, this skin of wine,
These tamarinds and dates, are thine;
And while thou eatest, Medjid, there,
Shall bathe the heated nostrils of thy mare.

Illah il' Allah! Even so
An Arab chieftain treats a foe,
Holds him as one without a fault
Who breaks his bread and tastes his salt;
And, in fair battle, strikes him dead
With the same pleasure that he gives him bread!

TWO SONGS FROM THE PERSIAN

I

O, CEASE, sweet music, let us rest:
Too soon the hateful light is born!
Henceforth let day be counted night,
And midnight called the morn.

O, cease, sweet music, let us rest:
A tearful, languid spirit lies
(Like the dim scent in violets)
In Zela's gentle eyes.

There is a sadness in sweet sound
That quickens tears. O music, lest
We weep with thy strange sorrow, cease!
Be still, and let us rest.

II

Ah! sad are they who know not love,
But, far from passion's tears and smiles,
Drift down a moonless sea, beyond
The silvery coasts of fairy isles.

And sadder they whose longing lips
Kiss empty air, and never touch
The dear warm mouth of those they love, —
Waiting, wasting, suffering much.

But clear as amber, fine as musk,
Is life to those who, pilgrim-wise,
Move hand in hand from dawn to dusk,
Each morning nearer Paradise.

O, not for them shall angels pray!
They stand in everlasting light,
They walk in Allah's smile by day,
And nestle in his heart by night.

THE SULTANA

IN the draperies' purple gloom,
In the gilded chamber she stands,
I catch a glimpse of her bosom's bloom,
And the white of her jewelled hands.

Each wandering wind that blows
By the lattice, seems to bear
From her parted lips the scent of the rose,
And the jasmine from her hair.

Her dark-browed odalisques lean
To the fountain's feathery rain,
And a parroquet, by the broidered screen,
Dangles its silvery chain.

But pallid, luminous, cold,
Like a phantom she fills the place,
Sick to the heart, in that cage of gold,
With her sumptuous disgrace!

A PRELUDE

HASSAN BEN ABDUL at the Ivory Gate
Of Bagdad sat and chattered in the sun,
Like any magpie chattered to himself,
And four lank, swarthy Arab boys that stopt
A gambling game with peach-pits, and drew near.
Then Iman Khan, the friend of thirsty souls,

The seller of pure water, ceased his cry,
And placed his water-skins against the gate, —
They looked so like him, with their sallow cheeks
Puffed out like Iman's. Then a eunuch came
And swung a pack of sweetmeats from his head,
And stood, — a hideous pagan cut in jet.
And then a Jew, whose sandal-straps were red
With desert-dust, limped, cringing, to the crowd, —
He, too, would listen; and close after him
A jeweller that glittered like his shop:
Then two blind mendicants, who wished to go
Six diverse ways at once, came stumbling by,
But hearing Hassan chatter, sat them down.
And if the Khaleef had been riding near,
He would have paused to listen like the rest,
For Hassan's fame was ripe in all the East.
From spicy Cairo to far Ispahan,
From Mecca to Damascus, he was known,
Hassan, the Arab with the Singing Heart.
His songs were sung by boatmen on the Nile,
By Beddowee maidens, and in Tartar camps,
While all men loved him as they love their eyes;
And when he spake, the wisest, next to him,
Was he who listened. And thus Hassan sung.
— And I, a stranger, lingering in Bagdad,
Half English and half Arab, by my beard!
Caught at the gilded epic as it grew,
And for my Christian brothers wrote it down.

A TURKISH LEGEND

A CERTAIN Pasha, dead five thousand years,
Once from his harem fled in sudden tears.

And had this sentence on the city's gate
Deeply engraven, "Only God is great."

So these four words above the city's noise
Hung like the accents of an angel's voice;

And evermore, from the high barbican,
Saluted each returning caravan.

Lost is that city's glory. Every gust
Lifts, with crisp leaves, the unknown Pasha's dust.

And all is ruin, — save one wrinkled gate
Whereon is written, "Only God is great."

GHOSTS

THOSE forms we fancy shadows, those strange lights
That flash on dank morasses, the quick wind
That smites us by the roadside, — are the Night's
Innumerable children. Unconfined
By shroud or coffin, disembodied souls,
Uneasy spirits, steal into the air
From ancient graveyards when the curfew tolls
At the day's death. Pestilence and despair
Fly with the sightless bats at set of sun.
And wheresoever murders have been done,
In crowded palaces or lonesome woods,
Where'er a soul has sold itself and lost
Its high inheritance, there, hovering, broods
Some sad, invisible, accursèd Ghosts !

NORA McCARTY

[IRISH AIR]

I

NORA is pretty,
Nora is witty;
Witty and pretty as pretty can be!
She's the completest
Of girls, and the neatest,
The brightest and sweetest:
But she's not for me.

Mavourneen!

2

Nora, be still, you!
Nora, why will you
Be witty and pretty as pretty can be,
So strong and so slender,
So haughty and tender,
So sweet in your splendor, —
And yet not for me?

Mavourneen!

MURDER DONE

I

INVISIBLE fingers of air
Just lifted the curtain's fold,
Just rippled the calm of her loosened hair, —
Beautiful, treacherous gold!

And she stood like the thought of a sculptor, carved
In marble, snowy and cold;
But her pure, sweet look was as foul a lie
As ever a woman told!

2

A statue lay stark at my feet,
Dead to the finger-tips.
A darkness hung in the lengths of her hair,
And shadowed her perjured lips.
I strangled her voice, but, O heaven!
I could not strangle one moan
That followed me out in the silent streets
As I fled through the midnight alone.
— This in a dream. Now I ask,
Am I guilty as if I were caught
With my hands at her throat? Is it murder done? —
I murdered her in my thought!

GLAMOURIE

UNDER the night,
In the white moonshine,
Sit thou with me,
By the graveyard tree,
Imogene.

The fireflies swarm
In the white moonshine,
Each with its light
For our bridal night,
Imogene.

Blushing with love,
In the white moonshine,
Lie in my arms,
So, safe from alarms,
Imogene.

Paler art thou
Than the white moonshine.
Ho! thou art lost, —
Thou lovest a Ghost,
Imogene!

THE POET

HE wasted richest gifts of God.
But here's the limit of his woes,
Sleep rest him! See, above him grows
The very grass whereon he trod.

He walked with dæmons, ghouls, and things
Unsightly . . . terrors and despairs,
And ever in the blackened airs
A dismal raven flapt its wings.

Behold! within this narrow grave
Is shut the baser part of him.
Behold! he could not wholly dim
The genius gracious heaven gave, —

For strains of music here and there,
Weird murmurings, vague, prophetic tones,
Are blown across the silent zones
Forever in the midnight air.

SEADRIFT

SEE where she stands, on the wet sea-sands,
Looking across the water:
Wild is the night, but wilder still
The face of the fisher's daughter!

What does she there, in the lightning's glare,
What does she there, I wonder?
What dread dæmon drags her forth
In the night and wind and thunder?

Is it the ghost that haunts this coast? —
The cruel waves mount higher,
And the beacon pierces the stormy dark
With its javelin of fire.

Beyond the light of the beacon bright
A merchantman is tacking;
The hoarse wind whistling through the shrouds,
And the brittle topmasts cracking.

The sea it moans over dead men's bones,
The sea it foams in anger;
The curlews swoop through the resonant air
With a warning cry of danger.

The star-fish clings to the seaweed's rings
In a vague, dumb sense of peril;
And the spray, with its phantom-fingers, grasps
At the mullein dry and sterile.

O, who is she that stands by the sea,
In the lightning's glare, undaunted? —
Seems this now like the coast of hell
By one white spirit haunted!

The night drags by; and the breakers die
Along the ragged ledges;
The robin stirs in its drenchèd nest,
The hawthorn blooms on the hedges.

In shimmering lines, through the dripping pines,
The stealthy morn advances;
And the heavy sea-fog straggles back
Before those bristling lances!

Still she stands on the wet sea-sands;
The morning breaks above her,
And the corpse of a sailor gleams on the rocks, —
What if it were her lover?

THE QUEEN'S RIDE

AN INVITATION

'TIS that fair time of year,
Lady mine,
When stately Guinevere,
In her sea-green robe and hood,
Went a-riding through the wood,
Lady mine.

And as the Queen did ride,
Lady mine,
Sir Launcelot at her side
Laughed and chatted, bending over,
Half her friend and all her lover!
Lady mine.

And as they rode along,
Lady mine,
The throstle gave them song,
And the buds peeped through the grass
To see youth and beauty pass!
Lady mine.

And on, through deathless time,
Lady mine,
These lovers in their prime,
(Two fairy ghosts together!)
Ride, with sea-green robe, and feather!
Lady mine.

And so we two will ride,
Lady mine,
At your pleasure, side by side,
Laugh and chat; I bending over,
Half your friend and all your lover!
Lady mine.

But if you like not this,
Lady mine,
And take my love amiss,
Then I'll ride unto the end,
Half your lover, all your friend!
Lady mine.

So, come which way you will,
Lady mine,
Vale, upland, plain, and hill
Wait your coming. For one day
Loose the bridle, and away!
Lady mine.

SONNETS

EUTERPE

Now if Euterpe held me not in scorn,
I'd shape a lyric, perfect, fair, and round
As that thin band of gold wherewith I bound
Your slender finger our betrothal morn.
Not of Desire alone is music born,
Not till the Muse wills is our passion crowned:
Unsought she comes, if sought but seldom found.
Hence is it Poets often are forlorn,
Taciturn, shy, self-immolated, pale,
Taking no healthy pleasure in their kind, —
Wrapt in their dream as in a coat-of-mail.
Hence is it I, the least, a very hind,
Have stolen away into this leafy vale
Drawn by the flutings of the silvery wind.

AT BAY RIDGE, L.I.

PLEASANT it is to lie amid the grass
Under these shady locusts, half the day,
Watching the ships reflected on the Bay,
Topmast and shroud, as in a wizard's glass:
To see the happy-hearted martins pass,
Brushing the dewdrops from the lilac spray:
Or else to hang enamoured o'er some lay
Of fairy regions: or to muse, alas!
On Dante, exiled, journeying outworn;
On patient Milton's sorrowfulest eyes

Shut from the splendors of the Night and Morn:

To think that now, beneath the Italian skies,
In such clear air as this, by Tiber's wave,
Daisies are trembling over Keats's grave.

PURSUIT AND POSSESSION

WHEN I behold what pleasure is Pursuit,

What life, what glorious eagerness it is;

Then mark how full Possession falls from this,
How fairer seems the blossom than the fruit, —

I am perplexed, and often stricken mute

Wondering which attained the higher bliss,

The wingèd insect, or the chrysalis

It thrust aside with unreluctant foot.

Spirit of verse which still eludes my art,

You shapes of loveliness that still do haunt me,
O never, never rest upon my heart.

If when I have thee I shall little want thee!

Still flit away in moonlight, rain, and dew,

Wills o' the wisp, that I may still pursue!

THE AMULET

THOUGH thou wert cunninger than Vivien, —

Faithful as Enid, — fair as Guinevere, —

Pure as Elaine, — I should not hold thee dear.

Count me not cold, decorous, unlike men!

Indeed the time was, and not long since, when —

But 'tis not now. An amulet I've here

Saves me. A ring. Observe: within this sphere

Of chiselled gold a jewel is set. What then?

Why, this, — the stone and setting cannot part,

Unless one's broken. See with what a grace

The diamond dewdrop sinks into the white
Tulip-shaped calyx, and o'erfloods it quite!
There is a Lady set so in my heart
There's not for any other any place.

EGYPT

FANTASTIC Sleep is busy with my eyes:
I seem in some waste solitude to stand
Once ruled of Cheops: upon either hand
A dark illimitable desert lies,
Sultry and still, — a realm of mysteries;
A wide-browed Sphinx, half buried in the sand,
With orbless sockets stares across the land,
The wofulest thing beneath these brooding skies
Where all is woful, weird-lit vacancy.
'Tis neither midnight, twilight, nor moonrise.
Lo! while I gaze, beyond the vast sand-sea
The nebulous clouds are downward slowly drawn,
And one bleared star, faint-glimmering like a bee,
Is shut i' the rosy outstretched hand of Dawn.

MIRACLES

SICK of myself and all that keeps the light
Of the blue skies away from me and mine,
I climb this ledge, and by this wind-swept pine
Lingering, watch the coming of the night.
'Tis ever a new wonder to my sight.
Men look to God for some mysterious sign,
For other stars than those that nightly shine,
For some unnatural symbol of His might.

Wouldst see a miracle as grand as those
The prophets wrought of old in Palestine?
Come watch with me the shaft of fire that glows
In yonder West: the fair frail palaces,
The fading alps and archipelagoes,
And great cloud-continents of sunset-seas.

FREDERICKSBURG

THE increasing moonlight drifts across my bed,
And on the churchyard by the road, I know
It falls as white and noiselessly as snow.
'Twas such a night two weary summers fled;
The stars, as now, were waning overhead.
Listen! Again the shrill-lipped bugles blow
Where the swift currents of the river flow
Past Fredericksburg, — far off the heavens are red
With sudden conflagration: on yon height,
Linstock in hand, the gunners hold their breath:
A signal-rocket pierces the dense night,
Flings its spent stars upon the town beneath:
Hark! — the artillery massing on the right,
Hark! — the black squadrons wheeling down to
Death!

ACCOMPLICES

THE soft new grass is creeping o'er the graves
By the Potomac; and the crisp ground-flower
Lifts its blue cup to catch the passing shower;
The pine-cone ripens, and the long moss waves
Its tangled gonfalons above our braves.

Hark, what a burst of music from yon bower! —
The Southern nightingale that, hour by hour,
In its melodious summer madness raves.
Ah, with what delicate touches of her hand,
With what sweet voices, Nature seeks to screen
The awful Crime of this distracted land, —
Sets her birds singing, while she spreads her green
Mantle of velvet where the Murdered lie,
As if to hide the horror from God's eye.

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